From Role Play to Behavior: How Cultural Background Influences Western and Eastern MMOG Players in *World of Warcraft*

A Thesis

Presented to

The Academic Faculty

by

Jihan Feng

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Science in Digital Media in the

School of Literature, Media, and Communication

Georgia Institute of Technology

August 2014

From Role Play to Behavior: How Cultural Background Influences Western and Eastern MMOG Players in *World of Warcraft*

Approved by:

Dr. Celia Pearce, Advisor
School of Literature, Media, and Communication
Georgia Institute of Technology

Dr. Janet Murray
School of Literature, Media, and Communication
Georgia Institute of Technology

Dr. Amy Bruckman
School of Interactive Computing
Georgia Institute of Technology

Dr. Bonnie Nardi
School of Information and Computer Sciences
University of California, Irvine

Date Approved: May 16, 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to dear Dr. Celia Pearce for encouraging me to accomplish my research and reading my humble English writing. The completion of my thesis would not have been possible without the support and guidance you have given to me. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to my committee advisors: Dr. Janet Murray, Dr. Amy Bruckman, and Dr. Bonnie Nardi. I must thank Ms. Jane Chisholm for patiently revising my writing. I am extremely grateful to my parents, Mr. Bin Feng and Ms. Juan Wu, who had support me to accomplish my master's degree. Without your love, care, and encouragement, I would not be able to be here and make all the achievements. I really love you. Thanks should also go to my brother for patiently answering all my stupid questions. I very much appreciate Mr. Yuanchao Yao for bringing so much happiness to me. Thanks Mr. Yiheng Wu for giving me the lucky bracket for my birth year. Many thanks to all my friends at Georgia Tech.

The world is so big, and I have such honor to know all of you. I believe this is what we called destiny.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Symbols and Abbreviations

United States:	US
Chinese:	CN
Taiwanese:	TW
WOW:	*World of Warcraft*
D&D:	*Dungeons & Dragons*
MMOG:	massive multiplayer online games
RMT:	real-money trading
IP:	intellectual property
PVP:	player vs. player
PVE:	player vs. environment
RP:	role-playing
NPC:	non-playable characters
DPS:	damage per second
DKP:	Dragon Kill Points
GDKP:	Gold DKP
MUD:	multiple user dungeons
CoC:	Chinese player on Chinese servers
CoT:	Chinese player on Taiwanese servers
ToT:	Taiwanese player on Taiwanese servers
CoA:	Chinese player on American servers

PuG:	Pickup- group
SK:	Suicide Kings
EP:	effort points
GP:	gear points
AFK:	away from keyboard
Exp:	experience points s
ACG:	animation, comic, and game

Summary

Researchers have been studying virtual world culture for decades. However, little attention has been devoted to the intersection of virtual world culture and real world culture. Even less attention has been given to the study of comparing players' different virtual world game behaviors that have been influenced by their own real world cultural background. In this paper, I specifically focus on identifying the differences among American, Chinese, and Taiwanese cultures and the unique aspects of players with distinct cultural backgrounds that alter the atmosphere of the game. This is a mixed-method "trans ludic" study across three game servers that included participant observation, interviews, and surveys. The result of this study show that real world culture influences virtual world culture. Players in different countries bring real life experiences to the game and form their own emergent sub-cultures and sub-rules under the larger structure of the designated game rules and social conventions. When players immigrate from their original server to other countries' servers, initially they tend to find people from the same country to play with and follow their old social conventions, which are the sub-rules they create in their old servers, rather than play with the local players and adapt to new customs. However, over time, players develop hybrid cultures that adopt features from both the old cultures. This study also demonstrates that emergent behaviors are likely to occur when players face problems or difficult challenges.

Key words: virtual world, MMOGs, *WOW*, game behavior, localization, emergent behavior.

Chapter 1 - Between Reality and Virtual World

Although people have studied virtual worlds for decades, with a few exceptions, little attention has been devoted to the intersection of virtual world culture and real world culture. Many behavioral scientists and scholars are already conducting research on virtual worlds and beginning to use them as models for real-world environments to ask general social-scientific questions. Economist Edward Castronova (2005) argues that human life, economy, and culture will increasingly take place in these novel environments, and as such, they need to be studied as important phenomena in their own right. A virtual world is a production built upon a game designer's imagination and creativity. The rules of these virtual worlds may be drawn from the real or the fantasy world. Therefore, understanding the connection between virtual world cultures and real world cultures will help us more thoroughly comprehend the "trans ludic" (Pearce, 2009) practices that occur in virtual world. In addition, this work will analyze research conducted on cyber immigrants (players that leave their original game servers to another game environment) of games,

One of the most popular massive multiplayer online games (MMOGs) in the United States is *World of Warcraft* (WOW). Although WOW has been studied repeatedly by many game researchers, very few realize that the single biggest national group of *WOW* players is Chinese (Blizzard Press Release, 2008). Thus, even fewer researchers have focused on the game behaviors of these WOW players.

One of the few researchers who have studied outside the scope of American players is Bonnie Nardi, an anthropology researcher who qualitatively studied American players on United States servers (Nardi, 2010a) and went to China to study players in cyber cafes. However, the part of the study that took place in China comprised only a small section of her research; that is, it was not very extensive. Another researcher who has studied Chinese players is Holin Lin, who researched the Chinese cyber diaspora. Lin researched the migration of Chinese players to Taiwanese *WOW* servers because of technical and political problems in China and the cultural clash caused by this migration (Lin and Sun, 2011).

1.1 Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate how cultural background influences Western and Eastern MMOG players in the case of *WOW*, a multiplayer online game that has enjoyed huge success globally, peaking at over 12 million subscribers worldwide in 2010 (Figure 1.1). As of January 22, 2008, *WOW* has attracted more than ten million subscribers worldwide, with more than two million subscribers in Europe, more than 2.5 million in North America, and about 5.5 million in Asia (Figure 1.2).

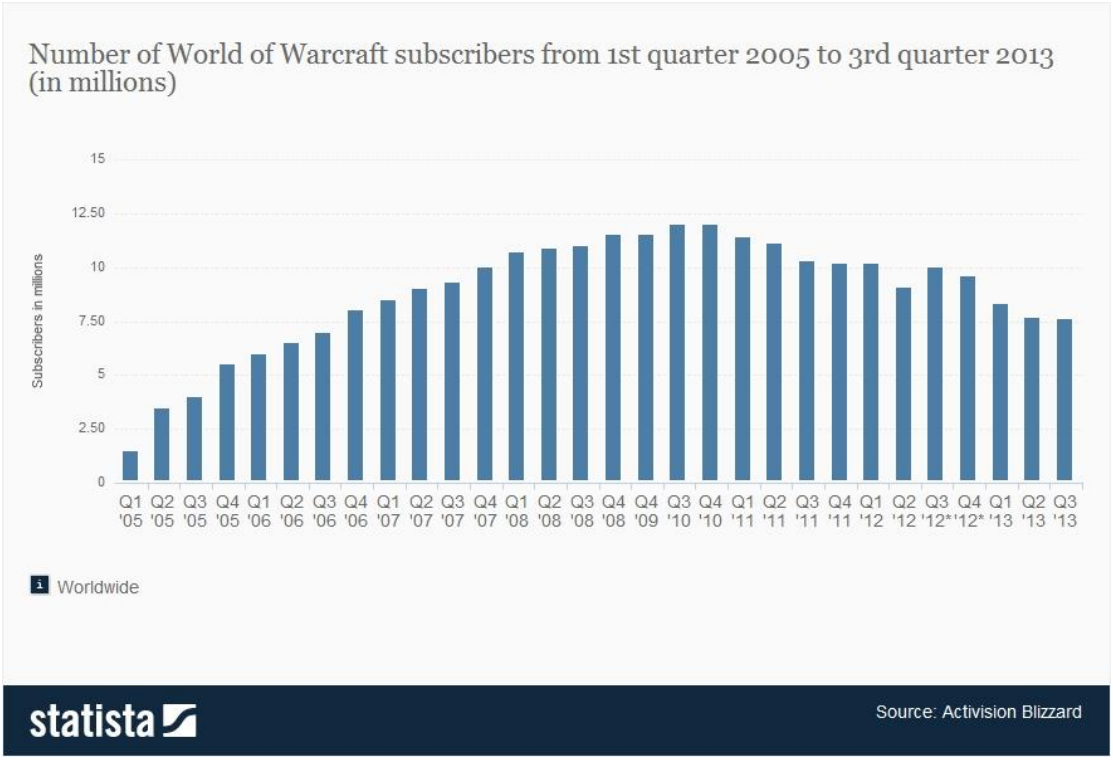

Figure 1.1 This statistic shows the number of active subscriptions for the MMORPG World of Warcraft online game from the first quarter of 2005 to the third quarter of 2013. In the last quarter of 2012, World of Warcraft had a subscriber base of 9.6 million. (Statistic, 2014)

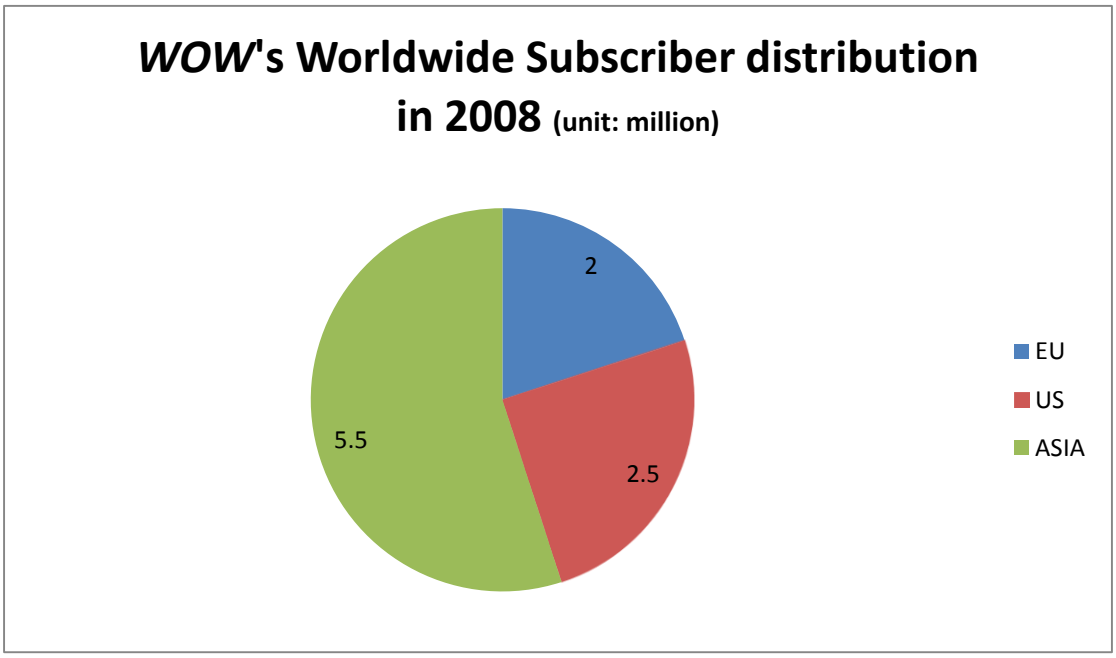

Figure 1.2 The Worldwide Subscriber distribution of WOW in 2008 (unit: millions) (Leigh Alexander, 2008).

This thesis explores the influence of culture on MMOG players in three different cultural contexts: United States (US) servers, Chinese (CN) servers, and Taiwanese (TW) servers. This comparison will allow a comparison of Western vs. Eastern players as well as two similar Eastern cultures that play slightly different versions of the game. This comparison will also show a distinction among the similarities and differences of culturally-influenced behaviors as well as behaviors that arise out of specific game features. This paper will specifically focus on identifying the differences among these three cultures and the unique aspects of players of different cultural backgrounds that alter the atmosphere of the game. In addition, this study will also examine how Chinese *WOW* players who have virtually "immigrated" from Chinese servers to Taiwanese servers have influenced the local game culture on Taiwanese servers. This study will cover the following research questions:

- Does real world culture influence the form of virtual world culture?

  Sub-questions of this main question are as follows:

  - What aspects of their cultures do players bring from their own lives and how do they incorporate them into their game behavior?
  - Does the in-game behavior of players from different cultures reveal different values and attitudes?
  - When players immigrate to other servers, what habits and behaviors from their original servers do they bring to the new homeland servers?

WOW, as classified by Pearce (2009), is a "fixed synthetic world. A fixed synthetic world is like a theme park with no tracks in which players can explore at will, but cannot change anything in the world except in prescribed ways" (Pearce, 2009, p. 186).

Actually, we might say that the virtual world is not only a theme park but also a "designed ecosystem" (Pearce 2009). In virtual worlds, characters that personify and express the design and the will of players are called "avatars." Avatars are playing roles in the game as visitors as well as local residents within the virtual world. Interestingly, the massive multiplayer online world is peculiar in the sense that players who are manipulating avatars are physically living in the real world, and they have their own inhabiting cultures. Hence, their behavior will be influenced by both the virtual game culture and the real life culture.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Introduction to the *World of Warcraft*

Who are "We" in *WOW*?

Based on the fantasy theme from a variety of sources that are well accepted in western culture, *WOW* is staged in a medieval fantasy setting. Beginning one's adventure in *WOW*, one must create a character. Players choose their gender, race, faction, and class, and they select detailed variations in appearance such as hair style, hair color, tattoos, or ear rings. They classify all their characters by race and faction and choose one of the many classes available; however, depending on the race, some the

classes may be inapplicable. The races in *WOW* originated in tabletop games and MMOG predecessors such as *Dungeons and Dragons* and the *Blizzard*'s *Warcraft* series.

Players are divided into two factions: Alliance or Horde. Each faction is sub-classified according to the union of their races. The subgroups under the Alliance are the Human, Worgen, Dwarf, Night Elf, Gnome, and Draenei races; and those under the Horde are the Goblin, Orc, Tauren, Troll, Undead, and Blood Elf races. Some of these races have anatomical structures similar to those of humans, or they are humanoid in appearance; others represent more animal-like or non-human appearance. On September 25, 2012, *Blizzard* released the fourth expansion set to *WOW: Mists of Pandaria*. In this expansion set, a new race, Pandaren, was introduced. Unlike previous races in *WOW*, which are tied to either the Horde or Alliance in-game factions, the Pandaren race is neither in the Alliance nor Horde faction in the early levels of the game, but instead remains neutral. Until the end of the principal quest line on the *Wandering Isle* (the birthplace of the Pandaren), Pandaren player characters are faction-less; at the end of their quest, they may choose to align themselves with either the Horde or the Alliance (BlizzCon 2011: Mists of Pandaria Overview, 2011).

Class / Race	Warrior	Paladin	Hunter	Rogue	Priest	Death Knight	Shaman	Mega	Warlock	Monk	Druid
Human	√	√	√	√	√	√	×	√	√	√	×
Worgen	√	×	√	√	√	√	×	√	√	√	√
Dwarf	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	×
Night Elf	√	×	√	√	√	√	×	√	×	√	√
Gnome,	√	×	×	√	√	√	×	√	√	×	×
Draenei.	√	√	√	×	√	√	√	√	×	√	×
Pandaren	√	×	√	√	√	√	√	√	×	√	×
Goblin	√	×	√	√	√	×	×	√	√	×	×
Orc	√	×	√	√	×	√	√	√	√	√	×
Tauren	√	√	√	×	√	√	√	×	×	√	√
Troll	√	×	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Undead	√	×	√	√	√	√	×	√	√	√	×
Blood Elf	√	√	√	√	√	√	×	√	√	√	×

Table 1.1 Only certain races can choose certain classes.

Role / Class	Tank	Healer	Damage dealer
Warrior	√	×	√
Paladin	√	√	√
Hunter	×	×	√
Rogue	×	×	√
Priest	×	√	√
Death-Knight	√	×	√
Shaman	√	√	√
Mage	×	×	√
Warlock	×	×	√
Monk	√	√	√
Druid	√	√	√

Table 1.2 Certain classes play certain roles.

Players may select a variety of classes in the game, but only certain races can choose certain classes (Table 1.1). The classes are as follows: Warrior, Paladin, Hunter, Rogue, Priest, Death Knight, Shaman, Mega, Warlock, Monk, and Druid. Certain classes can only play certain roles (Table 1.2), which can be classified into three

main genres: Tank, Healer, and Damage Dealer. A tank is a role whose primary job is to absorb damage and prevent other characters from being attacked, damaged, or killed. Tanks are "meatshields," so to speak, putting themselves between the mobs and the more vulnerable party members. An often-used abbreviation for a main tank is "MT." Tanks are also the most prioritized members of a dungeon or a raid, which are sub-missions spread throughout the *WOW* virtual world for players to group together to complete a task to receive gold, experience, or items. Healers typically play the second most demanding role in a dungeon or a raid. A healer is a character whose primary tactical purpose is to heal friendly creatures and characters or to give them defensive buffs. Players who are responsible for causing injury to monsters are called "damage dealers," nearly always dubbed DPS, short for "damage per second," or DPSer in-game (WoWWiki, n.d).

Creating a character is an important decision for the players, some of whom find some races highly attractive while some overlook them. This judgment depends on the players' own perceptions. When choosing their characters, players may base decisions on various factors such as culture. For example, the least chosen class on the Chinese servers is Shaman, which may be the result of a lack of understanding of the meaning of "Shaman" by the Chinese; however, on United States servers, the least chosen class is Rogue, but one of the top four most chosen classes is Shaman (perhaps because a Shaman is a respected, wise individual) (178.com, 2011, 2012). Ducheneaut et al. reported that players, rather than looking at a character's stats, were choosing to play certain characters mainly based on aesthetics (Ducheneaut et al., 2009).

Characters go on quests, either for their factions or for other individual or grouped NPCs (i.e., non-playable characters), that send them gallivanting out into the virtual world to hunt enemies and to gather resources (Bainbridge, 2010). The core gameplay in *WOW* is combat. The core combat experience is killing computer-generated monsters, called player vs. environment (PvE). The secondary combat experience is among the players themselves, which is player vs. player (PvP) (Nardi, 2010a). PvP is adored by some players and abhorred by others. To cater to both audiences, *Blizzard* dubbed a kind of server to be either PvE or PvP at the player's discretion and game preference. In addition to these two kinds of servers, a third type of server, called role-playing (RP), is also an option for players who prefer following a storyline and completing step-by-step missions to independently roaming and killing monsters and mobs for gold and items. Role-Playing realms give players the opportunity to develop characters with a backstory who do not simply progress from quest to quest, but instead assist or hamper the efforts of others for reasons of their own (Blizzard, n.d.). However, RP servers are significantly less popular and less studied than PvE or PvP servers. Most of the research on *WOW* only mentions RP servers tangentially. Chan (2010) has studied *WOW*, specifically on public role-playing events in her master's thesis, which shows how the design of in-game locations informs players' use of role-playing and thus, how locations are altered through storytelling.

Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974) has been regarded as a valid contemporary sociological theory of play, games, and video games (Deterding, 2009). Goffman claimed that social frameworks, in which individuals play unique roles have

characteristics that pertain only to them, or classify themselves into a particular group or subset, enable others to comprehend the actions and thought processes of other players in the game. Besides the multiple social frame layers that can be applied simultaneously with different events, actions, items, and information fitting into an appropriate frame work, the frames holistically form a structure in which a participant analyzes and interprets to render the setting or situation. Goffman also mentions circumstances in which actions are misunderstood or incomprehensible, or as he termed it, "breaking frame." To avoid the breaking of frames, players also communicate and understand other players through out-of-game factors such as voice-chat, which enables players to hear and analyze the tone and meaning of another player's words and intentions.

In his examination of tabletop roleplaying games, *Shared Fantasy* (Fine, 2002), Gary Allen Fine drew on Goffman's theory. Fine notes that although the basic structures of game worlds are founded in the rulebooks, games themselves are outcomes of team effort by all the players. Fine (1983) points out that "a common frame of reference is necessary" (p. 80), which means that players should communicate into agreement of what is expected from game, so that all players can have fun experiences. In order to create meaningful and coherent actions for their characters and their games, players must possess "systematic, logical, and realistic assumptions of the game and its settings and environment to render a virtual environment with no false archetypes, similar to the mechanics behind *Dungeons and Dragons*" (p. 12). Fine also noted that in a role-playing game, players must move between the frames of the real physical world in

which they exist. For example, we all are Americans, we all work in the Georgia Institute of Technology, we all are in a same game group, and we all are playing the game. Therefore, all the players are nested in the larger cultural frame, and they are also inside their sub-frames of the game.

Besides Fine's examination, role-playing games are not always confined to tabletop games; they also appear on the internet in the form of text-based multiple user dungeons (MUDs), where the setting of the game has been solidified into rules that players must follow. However, players may still express their freedom of choice and imagination by customizing their individual characters. Nowadays, these types of games have been represented in graphically-based MMORPGs such as *WOW* and *Second Life*. Torill Elvira Mortensen (2006) researched connections between a tabletop RPG, *Dungeons and Dragons* (D&D), and MUDs, and discovered that though *D&D* was the predecessor of MUDs, the gameplay and structures differed. Matt Barton (2008) echoed Mortensen, stating that the first known MUD was built upon a *"D&D* type character creation." Taylor (2006) affirmed that online fantasy games owe a great deal to tabletop RPGs, such as derive their underlying mechanics from *Dungeons and Dragons*. Barton (2008), also believing that MUDs and MMORPGs were directly linked, said that one evolved into the other. Both MUDs and MMORPGs are inherited from tabletop RPGs, so to speak, and all three types of games contain an integral element of the social components that affect how these games are played.

Deterding (2009) abstracted from Goffman's *Frame Analysis* that the theory of frame analysis can be borrowed and applied in the aspect of game study: "brackets"

(the ability of multiple frames to be nested or layered); “upkeying” or “downkeying” (people’s ability to situationally add or subtract frames); “fabrications” (to differently frame the same situation and thus misunderstand or deceive other players in regard to the current real frame).

Wanenchak (2010), also used Goffman’s frame analysis theory in her study. She examined how online interactions in text-based game *Tabula Rasa* were understandable through the traditional sociological conventions of face-to-face interaction; laid out the conclusion that rules of interaction were in play and help so that the game is functional and sensible to players.

In his work, *The Interaction Order*, Goffman (1983) expertly pointed out that the framing of a situation could be not only created based on on-spot co-presence but also mediated through time and space over media and cultural memory within individuals. This viewpoint rendered frame analysis suitable for online games studies.

Who are “We” in real life?

In this research, I will use qualitative research methods such as participant observation, interviews, and surveys to investigate players on United States, Chinese, and Taiwanese servers. I choose these three countries for the following two reasons: To research 1) players from two different countries (or more precisely, cultures) and 2) players from two similar cultures. The comparison between the American and Chinese/Taiwanese cultures is actually the comparison between the Western and Eastern worlds. The comparison between the Chinese and Taiwanese cultures

distinguishes between two areas with the same language, and mostly the same cultural identity, with a couple of disparities. Interestingly, each of these groups plays a slightly different version of *WOW*, which might also affect emergent behavior along with their cultural dispositions.

One life exists in two worlds simultaneously

MMOGs are considered persistent worlds (Castonova, 2005; Taylor, 2006) in which players take part in cumulative activities. Steinkuehler and Williams (2005) note the similarity of such virtual worlds with the informal sociability "third places" identified by Oldenburg (1999). "Third place" is a term used in the concept of community building to refer to social surroundings separate from the two social environments of home (the first place) and the workplace (the second place) that such social surroundings will foster broader creative interactions (Oldenburg, 1999).

Ethnographically researching online game players differed than researching ordinary human beings living on earth, for each avatar in the online game environment is actually a resident physically existing in the real world. Furthermore, their behaviors will be influenced not only by the game culture itself (virtual world) but also their niche (real world). An avatar shows up only in the unreal game environment, but he is being instrumented by a human being living in the real world. As a result, the entity of an avatar is actually a combination of two worlds.

Prior studies on MMOGs have shown that behavior of players and comprehension of games are tied to cultural background as well as personal experience (Nardi, 2010a),

which results in players' different levels of understanding of the game play, the setting, and the narrative, and as such, will influence their attitudes as well as their individual and social behavior in the game. Nardi (2010a, 2010b) and Lin (Lin and Sun, 2011) have demonstrated that two regions with distinct cultures will affect players' actions very differently; although two areas share almost the same culture, the slight difference will still impact players' behaviors, even if all of them are playing the same game.

1.2.2 Before *WOW* Came to China

Before *WOW* became popular in China, Korean MMOGs occupied a large share of the Chinese MMOG market. Players, especially teenagers, college students, and young successful businessmen, were addicted to Korean online games such as *Legend* (2001), *MU Online* (2001), *MapleStory* (2003) and *Lineage Series* (2004). In 2006, *MapleStory* had a combined total of 39 million user accounts worldwide (Nexon Cooperation, 2006). *Lineage* had more than three million subscribers at one point (Lineage, 2014). These Korean games were very popular and it dominated the global market. The reason why they were so popular is probably due to large number of Chinese players. Although these Korean MMOGs referenced some game mechanics and narrative conventions of Western MMOG (e.g. the equipment would drop for the victor or passerby to collect once players were killed). These Korean MMOGs were so popular in China that the rules were adopted for Chinese MMOGs. A big difference between these Korean MMOGs and *WOW* is that these Korean MMOGs themselves are free, but some in-game items are purchased using real money, while in *WOW*, a player must pay a monthly fee to play online but most of the items in the game are free. Another Chinese

online game, *Zhengtu Online* (2006) copied the Korean MMOG model, gained huge success in the Chinese market and branded itself as "forever free," which attracted many players to join in the game. In *Zhengtu Online*, players can use silver coins or gold coins to purchase virtual items in the game. While silver coins are currency that players can earn in the game, gold coins can be purchased only with real money. In the later stage of the game, accomplishing some activities such as weddings or forging weapons require gold coins. Since some of the game players used to be rich businessmen in real life and were not hesitant to invest real money in the game to ensure that their avatars were the strongest warriors, this "free game" became a "money orgy game" at the time. As a result, Chinese players have become accustomed to the fact that the game is free, but as time has progressed, they have felt the need to spend real currency to purchase items in the virtual world of the game.

1.2.3 Immigration to Other Servers

On November 23, 2004, *Blizzard Entertainment* launched the first version of *WOW* in North America. *Blizzard*'s Chinese representative, *The9 Limited*, released a simplified Chinese language version for open testing on April 26, 2005, mainly for players in Mainland China. In Taiwan, the counterpart, *Game First*, released a traditional Chinese language version on October 5, 2005, for players in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau (World of Warcraft, n.d.) (Simplified Chinese characters and traditional Chinese characters are two standard character sets of the contemporary Chinese written language. The former one is officially used in the People's Republic of

China and Singapore; the latter one is currently used in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan.). When *WOW* was initially launched globally, except for linguistic interfaces and minor cosmetic variations, its versions were essentially the same worldwide. However, geographic segregation means that modular adjustments are required in terms of server infrastructure. Thus, players in America are assigned to the United States server group, players in China are assigned to the Chinese server group, and players from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau are assigned to the Taiwanese server group. As a result, to cater to global player demand, the game was localized by translating it into various languages. Later, servers in various regions were able to handle different versions of the game.

In January of 2007, *Blizzard* released its first *WOW* expansion set, *WOW: The Burning Crusade* (*TBC*). The highest level a character could achieve in the new version became 70 (previously 60); many *WOW* players refer to this era is referred to as "the 70s." To provide higher quality of game play, *Blizzard* required its regional operators to upgrade server hardware to support the updated content in order to earn rights to release new patches. *Game First* invested new equipment and quickly released *TBC* on Taiwanese servers, while *The9 Limited* was hesitant to adjust for the upgrade, in great part due to Chinese government policies, a lengthy approval process for imported games, and emphasis on harmonious "society-oriented" game content (Figure 1.3).

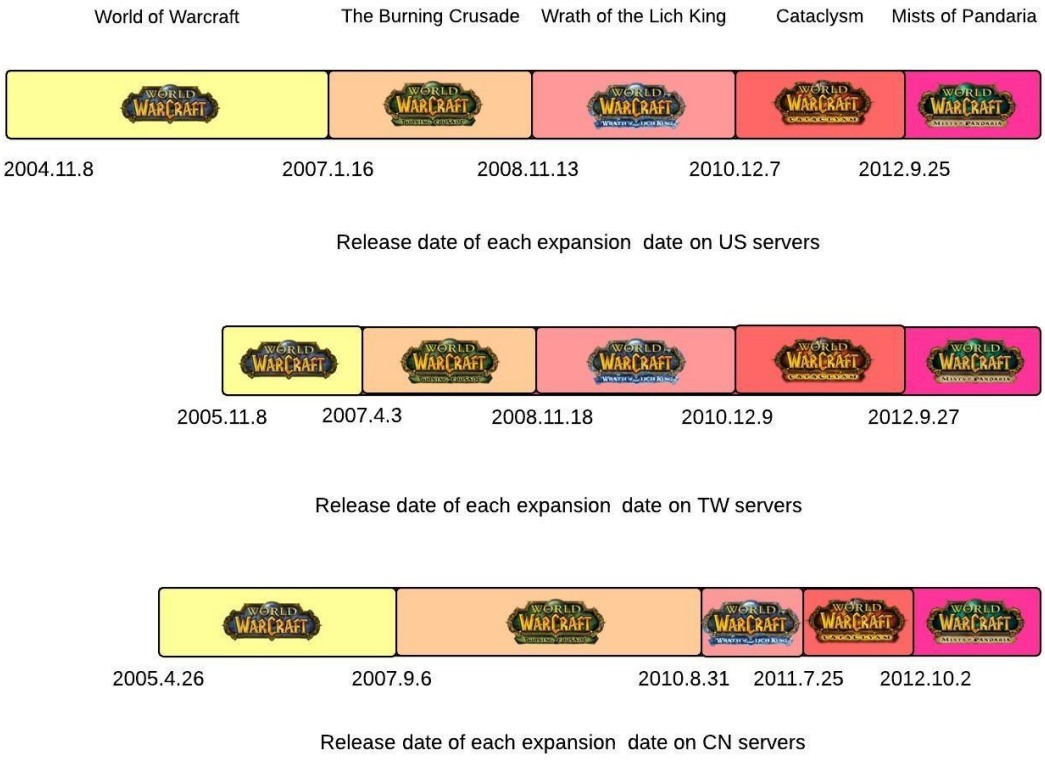

Figure 1.3 The release date of each expansion on the US, TW, and CN servers.

This hesitation by *The9 Limited* to adjust to the upgrade caused an enormous migration of players originally playing on Chinese servers to Taiwanese servers, which triggered server overloads, long log-on queues, and lag. The population of China was about 1.36 billion, while the population of Taiwan was two million. Even though the number of the virtual immigrant was unknown, it must be an overload burden to the Taiwanese servers according to the proportion. Many Taiwanese players denounced Chinese players that were “invading” their servers and breaking the online social order and game culture. A significant number of Chinese players flooded public channels with messages, failed to wait for their proper turn in game order, failed to extend the common courtesy of greeting when joining a game, or engaged in impolite conversation, all of which were considered infractions that deteriorated the relationship between the

Chinese and Taiwanese players (Lin and Sun, 2011). To solve the overloading problem, *Game First* increased the number of Taiwanese servers. However, several months later, in September of 2007, *The9 Limited* released the *TBC* version in Mainland China, which led to an immediate return of the large majority of migrant Chinese players to their local servers. Some Taiwanese servers abruptly became sparsely populated and inevitably became ghost towns in the virtual world. As such, *Game First* had to merge and eliminate servers to maintain profitability. Once again, Taiwanese players deeply resented Chinese players. In many forums, Taiwanese players used terms such as "the locust plague" to describe the Chinese players' "scaling-homing process" [term defined by Lin, means these players were returned to their original Chinese servers in a large scale].

On November 13, 2008, *Blizzard* released its second *WOW* expansion set, *Wrath of the Lich King (WLK)*. Taiwanese servers introduced a local version in five days, but *The9 Limited* refused to introduce this version because it was having a contract renewing problem with *Blizzard*. The refusal initiated another immigration wave. Eventually on June 7, 2009, *The9 Limited* lost its license. Then the well-prepared *Game First* Company immediately announced that it welcomed players to register accounts on five new Taiwanese servers through Chinese IP addresses. This time, the players and even some guild groups migrated collectively. Because Taiwanese players strongly felt that their servers had been totally dominated by the invaders and that their local game culture had been pointed in the wrong direction, a quarrel between the players became inevitable (Figure 1.4).

Four immigrant waves from CN servers to TW servers

1. **February 2007** The release of the *TBC* expansion was postponed. Some Chinese players moved to Taiwanese servers to experience the new version in advance.

2. **June 2007** As a result of the Harmony Policy by the Chinese government, the CN servers updated a 2.0 patch to amend some "disharmonious" 3D models such as graves and bones. Some Chinese players could not bear it so they decided to leave.

3. **November 2008** The *WLK* expansion was released on US, EU, and TW servers in succession. The release date of CN servers was far off. Chinese players were tired of waiting and a large number chose to leave CN servers. Some guild groups, such as *Stars* and *The 7th Heaven* moved entirely to TW servers.

4. **June 2009** The update of the *WLK* expansion was delayed for half a year, while *The9 Limited* was having a contract problem with *Blizzard.* The servers were shut down temporarily.

Figure 1.4 Four immigrant waves from Chinese to Taiwanese servers.

In September 2009, *Blizzard* signed an agreement with a new Chinese operator, *NetEase*, and Chinese servers resumed operations. However, as a result of Chinese government content regulations and publication control polices for imported games, the release of the new expansions of *WOW* in Chinese servers was long-delayed, so *NetEase* was forced to continue running the outdated *TBC* version of *WOW* rather than the *WLK* version.

Since 2008, many Chinese players, after many days of endless and desperate waiting for the *WLK* expansion set, have chosen to abandon Chinese WOW servers and settled for a new life on Taiwanese WOW servers. Conflicts were inevitable at first, but eventually, cultural integration accompanied the immigration.

On August 31, 2010, 19 months following the launch of *WLK* on United States servers, *NetEase* finally received approval of its game content from the Chinese government. Some players chose to return to Chinese servers because of the unstable connection to Taiwanese servers or the unfriendly game environment. Some chose to stay because they believed the Taiwanese servers were faster at implementing expansions. In retrospect, the entire process of the immigration led to an intriguing phenomenon in which, to some extent, these "permanent alien residents" were actually leading separate lives in a foreign country even though they were still physically living in their own countries. Lin and Sun (2011) termed this new practice "migration without physical presence." The game behavior of these permanent alien residents was deeply influenced by Chinese game culture, but in order to pursue a better gaming experience, they had to adjust themselves and cater to Taiwanese game culture.

Individuals on both sides of the Taiwan Strait use the term *immigration* to describe online gamer movement. The concept *diaspora* was used by Pearce (2009) to describe her observation of the *Uru (Uru: Ages Beyond Myst)* refugees' migration to other online games when their favorite game was shut down. Pearce found that the *Uru* players absorbed the culture of *Uru* and *Myst* and kept it alive by preserving it in other virtual worlds and combined it with the "local environment," such as expanding and extending the *Uru/Myst* world through the creative application of their own skills and imagination.

The analyses of the Chinese-Taiwanese immigration are listed as follows: First, the telepresence of high-tech MMOG and the digital presence of avatars provide a strong sense of place and residence, with players being fully conscious of the cultural

differences between Chinese and Taiwanese servers. Second, the differences between Chinese and Taiwanese social behaviors gave rise to severe disputes at the beginning of the immigration, but soon the players of the two countries with similar but slightly different cultural backgrounds began to collaborate and incorporate their features. The remainder of this study will look at the emergent behaviors that arose as a result of the confluence of these two cultures and make comparisons of emergent behaviors in *WOW* on American servers, which will enable one to obtain a deeper insight into the extent to which software design and real-world culture influence the development of emergent cultures in multiplayer games.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

Many scientists and scholars have been focused on research related to virtual worlds, and begin to use them as environments to ask general social-scientific questions (Bainbridge, 2010). As online virtual worlds are growing in popularity and mainstream access, ethnographic research in this area reflects considerations of these worlds as specifically spaces of play (Boellstorff et al., 2012).

One of the world's most popular MMOGs and the subject of extensive study by game researchers and designers is *World of Warcraft*, also referred to as *WOW*. A variety of ways that the shape of the game and the activities take place in WOW can be explained. Early researchers focused on the social aspects and role play of the virtual worlds in *WOW*. Nick Yee's "the Daedalus Project" was a long-running survey study about MMO players. Yee (2006) suggested that online play was always a contextual combination of social and physical access and mentioned that a variety of game-play styles could coexist within the same system. Taylor (2006a, 2006b) examined MMOGs such as *Everquest* and *WOW*. She argued that these games were fundamentally social spaces, not isolating and alienating activities indulged in by solitary teenagers. However, early researchers tended to study one guild group, one server, or one culture they were playing in because they overlooked the "outside world" that might be also worth studying.

Many researchers engaged in quantitative studies and questionnaires on *WOW* through participant observation, interactions, player interviews, and online surveys.

Examples of these academic studies were the Truants, a guild group of game scholars researching the game, shared their first-hand experiences of being residents of Azeroth and data gathered themselves, in the collected casebook set *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity, A World of Warcraft Reader* (2008). In this book, Rettberg drew an analogy between *WOW* and "capitalist fairytale" (p. 20). He interpreted *WOW* as a simulation of Western market-driven economies; every player was offered equal access to training in basic economics and was promised wealth and status as long as they were hard-working laborers, thus acting as a form of "corporate training" (p. 20). Besides, Mortensen noticed that during playing players were in "deviant strategies" (p. 213), in which many players chose their own goals when they played, which meant they seemed not to be playing according to the original plan of the game designers. Instead of killing monsters and leveling up, they preferred socializing, leading guild groups, role-playing, or even catching gold farmers primarily.

Bainbridge (2010) examined the society that has developed within the world of Azeroth. He, had spent over 2300 hours in this virtual world with every race and class in his game account, had a comprehensive understanding of the social science of *WOW* civilization and mentions several aspects such as religion, economy, and culture, suggested that virtual interactions by Azerothians were resemble to interactions in offline public society. He believed that *WOW* was a laboratory where the social and behavioral sciences could thrive and contribute to information science and technology. After all, virtual worlds were ideal environments for researchers to explore wider issues related to emerging technologies such as intellectual property rights and the

sociotechnical implications of online misbehavior (Knaak, 2004).

Nardi (2010a) played *WOW* herself and experienced a role as a night elf priest. During her play, she focused on the peculiarities of human play and argued that video games such as *WOW* were a new visual-performative medium enabled and strongly shaped by the capacities of digital technology; in particular, the execution of digital rules were powerful enough to evoke complex worlds of activity. She believed that this new medium provided a stimulating visual environment allowed accessibilities for both players and researchers to a release of creativity and a sense of empowerment in conditions of autonomy, sociality, and positive rewards.

Shi (2012) investigated *WOW* in the aspect of team collaborating in raiding in Chinese servers. Through her examination of the process of obtaining loot and the comparison between DKP raid and Gold Raid, she indicated that instead of accepting game rules passively, players interacted with outside world settings subjectively; thus they formed their own consensus of a social contract. She also noted that the pattern of collaboration in *WOW* was an ideal mode of "distribution according to work" that reflected the inside principle of "fair play" (p. 8).

Nardi (2010b) researched *WOW* Chinese gold farming phenomenon on United States servers and went to China to complete that research. She found that the popular conception of the gold farmer's activities as "savvy, sophisticated, technically advanced, complex, or progressive" (2010b) was incorrect. The emerging economic enterprise of gold farming was largely relegated to young men playing a video game for money amidst their unsettling, Third-World surroundings.

After exploring cheating and its place in MMORPG *Final Fantasy XI*, Consalvo (2007) asserted that "a debate exists around the definition of cheating and whether it actually hurts other players … players themselves see little common ground in what constitutes cheating" (p. 150). She noted that the real-money trading (RMT), or buying and selling in-game property for real money, was disliked, as she wrote the "gil (currency in *Final Fantasy XI*)-buying practices is viscerally despised by some players" (p. 164).

Heeks (2010) investigated gold farming and RMT at the intersection of real and virtual economies. He measured the nature of the relation between the real and the virtual, and the extent to which standard/real world economic models were applicable to virtual economies. He suggested that gold farming was part of a dynamic that had had eroded the real or virtual world dichotomy; gold farming and real-money trading reflected the lack of distinction between the real and the virtual worlds.

Nakamura (2009) responded to Consalvo by examining the racialization of informational labor in Machinima (the use of real-time game graphics engines to create cinematic productions) about Chinese player workers in *WOW*. She looked into the fan-produced video of insulting Chinese, or the gold farmers. She implied that as long as Asian gold farmers were regarded as unwelcomed guest workers within the culture of MMOs, user-produced extensions of MMO-space such as Machinima would continue to depict Asian cultures as threats to the virtual space.

Lindtner and Nardi et al. (2008) went to China and with native-speaking assistants to examine the hybrid cultural ecology of gaming in China as a digital and physical

space of collaboration in the *wang ba* (Chinese cyber café). They interviewed and observed 80 Chinese players of *WOW*, and asked them questions about their in-game activities. They explored how digital-physical hybrids can be deeply intertwined with socio-economic decisions, expressions of trust and friendship, and in-game dynamics entangled with a regulatory political system.

The multitude of research has revealed other interesting aspects of other MMOGs. For example, in *Communities of Play* (2009), Pearce explored emergent fan cultures in networked digital worlds where actions by players did not coincide with the intentions of the game designers. Pearce particularly looked in the *Uru* Diaspora, a group of players whose game, *Uru: Ages beyond Myst*, was ended. Pearce analyzed the properties of virtual worlds and looked at the ways of design-affected emergent behavior. She discussed the methodologies for studying online games, including a personal account of the sometimes messy process of ethnography. Pearce reinforced the "play turn" (p. 278) in culture and the advent of a participatory global playground enabled by networked digital games, which was as communal as the global village Marshall McLuhan saw united by television. Countering the stereotypical definition of play as unproductive and referring to the long history of pre-digital play practices, Pearce also argued that play can be a prelude to creativity.

Play Between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture by Taylor (2006a) presented a study of the MMOG *EverQuest* that analyzed the social systems at work among those who played the game and how they affected interactions within the game. Taylor described how players' interactions blurred the boundaries of a game and not a

game, online and offline, as newbies learned from oldies "not only how to play, but how to be (Taylor, 2006a)" (Ayoub, 2006).

The aspects of culture that researchers focused on were very distinct. However, most of them focused on only the servers of the local countries they were in and were not curious about emergent behavior from foreign players occurring in the servers of their local countries. Most examined the local game environment and game play through their own cultural interpretation. However, virtual social games such as *WOW* are emerging as global artifacts but with vastly different cultural contexts. The distinct behaviors of players, the various sub-rules of game environment, and the diversity of collaboration model all reflect a broad values orientation shaped by the local culture. Therefore, even though players on different servers (geographic segregation by the game companies) basically have the same infrastructure facilities, they play the game differently according their own social conventions.

Fortunately, some researchers have already taken a step in advance and begin identifying cultural differences on servers of a variety of countries. Cultural differences might lead to players' distinct behaviors. Usually, the distinctions of players are usually resulted from the "immigrant" phenomenon that occurs on the server of a country or culture to which a player does not belong. Many reasons can cause the immigrant phenomenon, such as international students and the "cyber diaspora" (Pearce, 2009).

When immigrating to other game worlds, many *Uru* players identified themselves as "refugees." Pearce (2009) used the term *diaspora* (p. 69) to describe the movement

of these players whose original online homeland *Uru: Ages beyond Myst* was shut down to new game play worlds such as *There.com* and *Second life*. Pearce observed that the profound connections formed by player patterns, suggested that online game activities had unique social contents that sustain long-term affiliation.

Besides the *Uru diaspora*, other online game immigrant was found by researchers. Lin and Sun (2011) researched the *WOW* China-Taiwan online immigration phenomenon. The immigration resulted from Chinese servers that were temporarily shut down because of political issues, which made possible the daily and long-term communication and collaborative contacts among individuals who in the past had no such opportunities. She found that even though the conflict of cultural gap once an obstacle, after the long period of contact, the Chinese and Taiwanese game cultures had evolved, producing a new understanding of the cross-Strait relationship.

Researchers also compared the game culture of various countries. Kow and Nardi (2010) studied modding (end-user modification of commercial hardware and software) communities in China and American. According to their measures of productivity and creativity, they found that American modders significantly outranked Chinese modders. Kow indicated that while in China the core modding activities were localizing and distributing mods, in the United States, major modders emphasized the development of original mods.

Nardi (2010a) went to China, observed and interviewed Chinese *WOW* players with her assistant. She discovered several differences between the play styles of Chinese and those of American players, such as “gold raids,” playing in cyber cafes

with friends (rather than playing at home alone), using the general chat channel to broadcast cheaters, and male players being reluctant to play female characters. Since the exploration in China was only a small part of her *WOW* research, Nardi did not go very deeply into this discussion. She acknowledged that Chinese players are playing differently compared to American players.

Sun et al. (2010) also compared achievement in Taiwanese and American *WOW* player cultures. By analyzing data on the level upgrade efficiency and the participating guild raid population, they verified the claims commonly found on Taiwanese game community discussion boards that players in Taiwan emphasized personal achievement while American players emphasized recreation and cooperation.

The topic of comparing players' motivations and behaviors from different countries and seeing how such differences might affect game servers has been noticed by a handful researchers. They claimed that players from different nations or cultures tended to have different gaming behaviors. Besides, the reasons leading into diverse in-game behaviors are also worth studying. The sub-rules that players agree in each game servers should be corresponded to the attitudes and values prevailing in local policy, finance, and society. When immigrants bring conventions to a new server, local players might judge differently on the imported conventions due to their different values. Through daily interactions, a new hybrid of game culture surface and replace the old tradition and thoughts. To study this correlation between the in-game and out-game cultures, more research is needed. To better investigate the relationship between virtual game world culture and real world culture, such comparative study is necessary.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This is a mixed-method "trans ludic" (Pearce, 2009) study across three game servers that included participant observation, interviews, and surveys. Through the use of a Google Survey, Chinese online survey tool, and instant chatting tools such as Facebook and QQ, participants were able to provide their opinion and communicate with the interviewer. The methods utilized for the interviews and surveys consist of three components: consent form and basic information surveys, text-based interviews, and second-time interviews only relating to particular players. The content of the consent form and the surveys will be presented later.

Before starting this paper, I participated in an ethnography study group under Dr. Celia Pearce's guidance. I have read numerous papers pertaining to research and survey methods such as participatory action research (Kemmis (2005), multi-sided ethnography research (Marcus, 1995), feministic ethnography (Visweswaran, 1994), and a handbook about qualitative research writing (Wolcott, 2002). Marcus' paper was extremely helpful, mainly because it talked about the multiple sites of observation and participation both in and out of the world system, and move out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space (Marcus, 2005).

I read Goffman's books about frame analysis (Goffman, 1961, 1974), and Fine's book (2002) about players' role in the frame of table top games. These books

enlightened me of the fact that “we” as real people and players are simultaneously in two frames. One is the cultural frame our real identities belong to; the other is the game frame that our player identities belong to. The two frames are partially overlapped. The overlapping is sometimes fluid, such when players are emerged into the game and they emphasize their frame of game and activate the shared area.

I also read about activity theory as another framework within which we can interpret interactions embedded in social contexts. According to activity theory, consciousness, which can be revealed from daily practice, is “firmly and inextricably embedded in the social matrix [composed of people and artifacts], of which every person is an organic part” (Nardi, 1996). Nardi further explained that artifacts can be “physical tools or sign systems such as human language” (Nardi, 1996) and that the key to employing activity theory is to perceive the interpenetration of the individual, people, and artifacts in daily practice, From my perspective, I believe culture background is another necessary artifact that belongs to sign systems that I should take into consideration when I apply activity theory to analyze player behaviors.

The basic structure of an activity consists of six elements: subject, object, community, tool, rules, and division of labor (see Figure 3.1). The three relationships among subject can be mediated by tools, object by rules, and community by division of labor. I used this structure to analyze the distributions of loot in raiding (see Chapter 4).

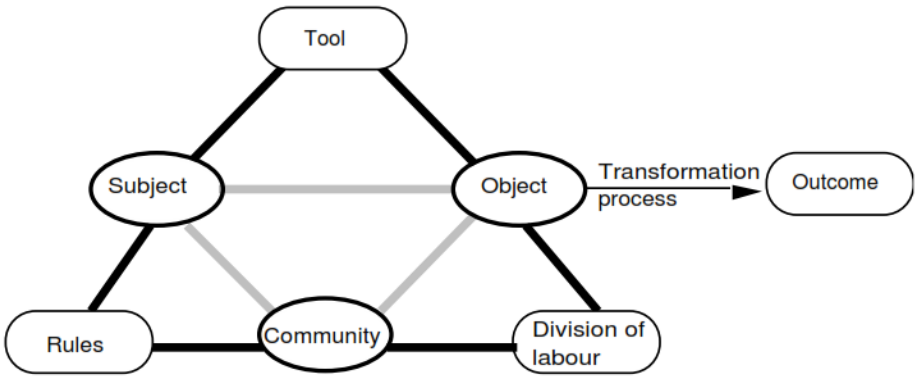

Figure 3.1 Basic structure of an activity (Kuutti, 1996) based on Engeström's (Engeström, 1987) conceptualization.

This study involves/consists of five phases: play *WOW* to observe and study players in American, Chinese, and Taiwanese servers (May through August, 2013); send out consent forms to interview players and collect chat logs, gather field notes from participant observation (June through October); analyze, compare, and discuss data with PI (Dr. Celia Pearce) (October through December); interview participants a second time if necessary to update data (December through February, 2014); amass all research-related information and data to write the thesis (December through March, 2014). This study was approved by Georgia Tech's Internal Review Board (IRB) under Protocol H13212 on October 13, 2013.

3.1Setting up the Study

This study mainly focuses on the WOW in-game culture and behavior as well as a comparative analysis of game culture and behavior in Western MMOG players and those in Eastern MMOG players, and a similar analysis between Chinese and Taiwanese MMOG players.

Why *World of Warcraft*?

The aim of this study is to determine what real world cultural factors, if any, contributed to differences in online culture within games. Therefore, the research required locating a well-established, popular game with significant international participation. In particular, I wanted to observe two Asian cultures, as well as the contrasts between American culture and Eastern culture to see what the differences may be. I chose *World of Warcraft* for various reasons. First, *WOW* has been run by Blizzard for a decade and has large number of players worldwide. Players from different countries already have deep understanding of the game story background and settings. In America, China, and Taiwanese, many players are still playing the game. Second, *WOW* is launched globally, therefore the version of the software running in different countries are basically the same except for linguistic interfaces and minor cosmetic variations (the delay of the publication in China is not counted here), which means that the reference game environment are essentially the same. Though comparison of cultures within the same game is a fairly new area of research, we do have some initial research in this area to build on (Nardi, 2010a, 2010b; Kow and Nardi, 2010; Lin and Sun, 2011). Third, *WOW* players love to produce fandom creation such as fictions and videos, emergent behaviors might also possibly take place during their game play. Pearce (2006) also looked at players' creative and enthusiastic game behavior in term of "productive play."

Why Western and Eastern Players?

WOW is staged in a medieval fantasy setting, which is a genre and setting commonly found in classic English literature, so it is a setting that is well accepted by western players. Other fantasy games such as *D&D* (*Dungeons & Dragons*) also provide a historical background to western game players. The author Tolkien with his fantasy stories also provided a blueprint for future fantasy narratives. Warriors, dragons, and treasures became the timeless topic for medieval fantasy culture. However, Eastern players are less familiar with medieval and fantasy culture, which has its origins rooted in European mythology and literature. Knights, Shamans, and Druids, for instance, are new concepts that Eastern players have not yet encountered in online games before *WOW*. Even the iconic dragon from fantasy and medieval stories holds various meanings in oriental cultures. The western players believe that dragons are evil and greedy, while Asian players believe dragons are elegant and saintly.

Under these circumstances, with such distinct opinions and traditions, players are motivated to behave differently in the games. What will they bring from their real life culture to the virtual game world, and to what extent will players localize the virtual game world into their own playground is something worth investigating.

Why Chinese and Taiwanese Players?

China and Taiwan hold not only a geographical relationship, but a historical one. Although the current political situation is complex, China and Taiwan do share the same cultural and historical background, although their cultures have been steering in slightly

different directions over the past fifty years. Since the Taiwanese culture is consanguineous with the Chinese, seeing how players from the two regions play the same game provides a meaningful comparison for a research study.

Furthermore, the two distinct, but related cultures have intermingled across *WOW* servers, creating interesting cultural changes and conflicts. While the two regions have distinct servers, in 2007, some Chinese players shifted to Taiwanese *WOW* servers due to *Blizzard*'s late updates in providing expansion sets to players in China. This virtual immigration wave reached its climax over the next two years. These great immigration waves immensely changed the Taiwanese servers' demographic composition. While Chinese and Taiwanese players have almost no problems in regards to communication because the official languages are essentially the same, emergent slang terminology differs between the two cultures. What game lives do Chinese players lead in Taiwanese servers? Did the Chinese players ultimately integrate with the Taiwanese players after their initial resistances? Did the Taiwanese servers change with respect to game culture and environment due to this migration wave? Did any new conventions replace old conventions? These questions are the driving force behind my study of the Taiwanese players' game rules, as well as the differences between the old and new conventions.

3.2 Participant Recruitments

Participant observation group members were recruited from guilds and online game friends, which stemmed out to the friends of those friends and their immediate social circles. I possess my own level 80 avatars on a Chinese server and other level 80

avatars from friends on Taiwanese and American servers. I played with my friends on their servers and observed the gameplay of my friends, as well as their immediate friends' gameplay. The goal of this research is to interview 30 players from the three countries' servers, 10 players from each server. Since some players are aliens playing in a nonlocal server, they will be tagged with their nationalities and servers for reference in the thesis. A Chinese player on a Chinese server will be tagged as CoC (Chinese on Chinese server), a Chinese player in a Taiwanese server will be tagged as CoT (Chinese on Taiwanese server), and so on. Participants were recruited through in-game private messages and recommendations through other participants as a "snowball method." This is similar to how a snowball rolling down the hill is initially small in size, as time progresses, the snowball gains mass as it picks up snow particles along the way. In such case, initially the pool of recruits is limited or minute, but through those participants, a greater population of volunteers may be contacted. The participants were selected for interviews and surveys. The interviews were conducted through an outside instant messaging tool (QQ), and Facebook instant messenger. The recruitment message contains a brief introduction of the project and a link to the consent form and survey. Participants needed to complete the survey first before the interview started. The introduction mentioned that the study appertains to a culture comparison of *WOW*. The participants were also informed that they must be over the age of 18 to participate in this study. The volunteers were informed that there is to be no compensation or reward for their participation. The recruitment document will be attached as an appendix in both English and Chinese.

Population Sample and Classification

The participants who volunteered for this study varied in nationalities. The actual players are 25 in total. Some of the participants hold previous knowledge and experience in playing on different countries' servers. Among the population sample, 5 are American, 18 are Chinese, and 2 are Taiwanese (Table 3.1).

Servers / Players	US servers	CN servers	TW servers
Weiwei	√		
Camel		√	√
Stars			√
Uchiha		√	√
Orient		√	√
Circle		√	
Embrace	√	√	√
Bamboo	√	√	√
Lemon		√	√
Tree		√	√
Alexia	√		√
Dora	√	√	
David			√
Lotus		√	√
Egg		√	
Bear		√	
Swan		√	
Wong	√	√	
Aven			√
Orange			√
Stove	√		
Dark	√		
Teddy	√		
Allen	√		
Jone	√		

Table 3.1 Names of the participants and servers from different countries that they have played on.

Survey Protocol

When the players clicked the link that directed them to the consent form and survey, players were required to provide their birthday for age verification. At the top of the survey, participants were asked to sign their avatar name. Other basic information such as gender and in game character information was also a part of the survey.

It is highly unlikely that the participants in this study may be claimed to represent the WOW gamer population holistically, but are only a subset. Being a study, 30 subjects are considered to be an appropriate amount for a qualitative study. As long as the subset population is representative of the different aspects of this study such as age, gender, and the servers the participants play on, then the study may make postulates and theories about the WOW population from the insight and knowledge acquired through this study. In the case of this study, the subset population is the interviewed players and the major population is *World of Warcraft* players. However, further concrete evidence may facilitate the research and data collection process, so searches on other archival data, such as game forums and other references, are needed to verify the answers, rather than solely relying on the participants' interview chat logs.

The questions of the survey are listed below:

1. I guarantee to provide my answer to this survey.

   (Please sign your avatar's name)

2. What is your gender?

   A. Female

   B. Male

C. Trans

D. Other

3. What is your nationality?(A list of countries will be provided)

4. How old are you?

A. 18-23

B. 23-30

C. 30-40

D. Above 40

5. Which category most accurately describes your level of education?

A. High school graduate

B. University graduate (Bachelor's degree)

C. Master's

D. Ph.D.

E. Others

6. What is your current job?

A. Student.

B. Office job.

C. Worker.

D. Doctor/ Medical related.

E. Technical job.

F. Others.

G. Without job.

7. I play in: (multiple choices)

   A. US servers

   B. Chinese servers

   C. Taiwanese servers

8. I started playing WOW since ____ (year) till ___(year).

9. Which fraction are you playing as your major avatar?

   A. Alliance

   B. Horde

10. Why do you play WOW?

11. What is your understanding of the game and your game experience?

Interview

The interview took between 30 and 45 minutes. First, the participants were asked to briefly summarize their *WOW* game experience, for example, how long they had played *WOW*, what servers they had played on before, what kinds of in-game activity they liked the most. Then, detailed questions were asked based on the participants' introductory answers. Interviewees did most of the talking. Occasionally, participants were asked questions on topics that were previously touched upon in other interview sessions and were asked their opinion. If the answers differed, participants were further questioned until a noticeable pattern was observed. Periodically, second-time interviews were required when there were insufficient data or when particular items needed further explanation.

As a person from China, I am able to understand all the interview content and cultural behaviors that the interviewees talk about. Following the interviews, the chat logs with the interviewees will be recorded and documented for quality purposes. Then, the dialogues will be reread and certain parts of dialogues that hold important data or information will be hand coded in different colors. This process will be facilitated by the use of a quantitative software called QSR NVivo to manage these materials. The dialogue files and data will be imported into QSR NVivo and classified into different categories. This procedure helps to compare the responses to questions that were mentioned by different participants simultaneously. All the participants' names are pseudonym for protecting their privacy. However, stories that are public known still use real names.

Also, a folder will be created to consolidate all the different source materials such as webpages, Wikipages, images, videos, and other reference papers. When players provide weblinks to their self-created fan art, fan fiction, and videos, with the players' permission, the players' works would then be downloaded and taken screenshots of, for possible future use.

Chapter 4 - Raiding

Nowhere are the cultural differences more pronounced than in the social conventions that have arisen around raiding. In this chapter, I list all the aspect of raiding and how it relates to local cultures. Raiding is one of the most complex activities in *WOW*, involving 10 to 25 players forming a collaborative team to defeat high-level monsters. To succeed in this goal, the team requires full concentration and tight coordination. To better conduct intricate and complex forms of raiding, team members communicate primarily through voice chat and use text chat in *WOW* as an additional communication channel.

To enter some high-level raids in WOW, players must reach level 80 (presently the highest level in the game). One benefit of participating in high-level raids is that players can obtain rare and high-quality gear and treasure items. However, the distribution of raid gear and treasures cannot be divided evenly, for a successful raid produces only small amounts of coveted equipment in proportion to the large number of players of the raiding team. Therefore, the team must repeat the same raid several times to guarantee that all players earn their own share of loot.

Usually, an ideal team consists of highly-skilled players with different roles. To find ideal teammates who can fill these job roles, players must spend copious amount of time and effort, which are referred to as "transaction cost." One example of such a cost is "searching and information costs," whereby one recruits desirable players who

are available, or "on the market," and are capable of performing satisfactory in raiding. Another example of a transaction cost is "bargaining costs," which require players to negotiate with other players to a transaction agreement that requires a legitimate and reasonable contract. In addition, "policing and enforcement costs" are those that ensure that the team members adhere to the terms of the contract and take appropriate actions if anyone breaches the contract.

To reduce the transaction cost of seeking appropriate raid members, WOW players create their own formal social organizations referred to as "guilds." Joining a guild group is the most efficient way to ensure that everyone receives rewards or compensation from raiding and plays a fixed role in guild raids. Guilds have hierarchical leadership structures, which are the most popular structure for players interested in executing joint missions (Lin & Sun, 2011). Guilds are usually formed as alliances based on trust, so players in the same guild are more likely to be acquainted with each other. Although players do not have to join a guild to participate in raids (i.e., the two are not linked, so they are independent), they tend to team up with their guild-mates because they are more familiar with them. Guilds become "labor markets" (Shi, 2012) that match players for raiding. The leaders of guilds, who are responsible for maintaining job balance in the guild, ensure that most of the players can participate in activities organized by the guilds. For example, if the guild contains too many members who are Damage Dealers for raiding, the guild leaders will tend to recruit more Tanks and Healers in the future to balance the guild.

Raiding teams consist of two typical types: One, formed by guild members to organize activities, which is called a “guild team.” The other type, comprised of raid members that do not belong to any particular guilds, but is formed through personal relations or public recruitment, is called a “pickup group” (PuG) (WoWWiki, n.d). These two types of teams appeared during different phases in the game. In each consecutive phase, players can choose to move from the guild team to the pickup group. At the beginning of each expansion, the new raids are usually very difficult for most players. Therefore, a guild is superior for seeking high-quality partners, because guilds can transition from one expansion to the other, and as such, guild members searching for a raid team has a more likely chance for selecting desirable members from the labor market. Besides, the Dragon Kill Points (DKP) system, which are points earned throughout a raid based on one’s performance and importance to the team, ensures the efficiency and stability of the team, for the objective of a raid is to accumulate DKP, which then can be used to auction for items and treasures looted at the end of a raid. DKP is achievement token that may only be admitted within the guild, which means that if the player leaves this DKP team and joins another, all the DKP from the previous raid cannot be transferred to the new team. Over time, once players become familiar with the raids in the expansion pack, and their equipment has been improved, the difficulties of the raids and finding appropriate team members become considerably effortless and less burdensome. If guilds are too intimidating of burdensome, one may opt out of guild raids for PuGs, since players have more freedom in the sense that guild

members are required to participate regularly or periodically in certain raids, while in PuGs, players may take on raids at their own pace and leisure.

4.1 Gold Raid Model

For *WOW* players on Chinese servers, two options are provided to obtain gear from raiding. The first is the longer of the two processes: to participate in a fixed raid at a fixed temporal pace, earn DKP, and use them as an inside currency. The second is a short-cut: use one's gold to buy whichever necessary items one may want in a "gold raid" (Nardi, 2010a).

Gold raid is a very special phenomenon and it is believed by the Chinese players to have originated on European *WOW* servers. However, gold raids did not become widespread in their birthplace, but they did carry onward on Chinese servers. Nardi (2010a) noted that gold raids freed players from having to join the same raids many times with the unpredictable outcome of obtaining equipment, as long as they possess sufficient gold to purchase these items.

> She was not raiding for real money but was directing a practice I did not observe in North America-running raids with auctions to raise game gold for individuals or guilds who needed it to purchase better equipment. Chinese players participating in gold raids were after high-end "purple" loot (loot was color coded) to empower their characters for raiding.
>
> Gold raids allowed players with sufficient gold to acquire items they wanted without having to be lucky or raid a lot. ---- Nardi (2010a).

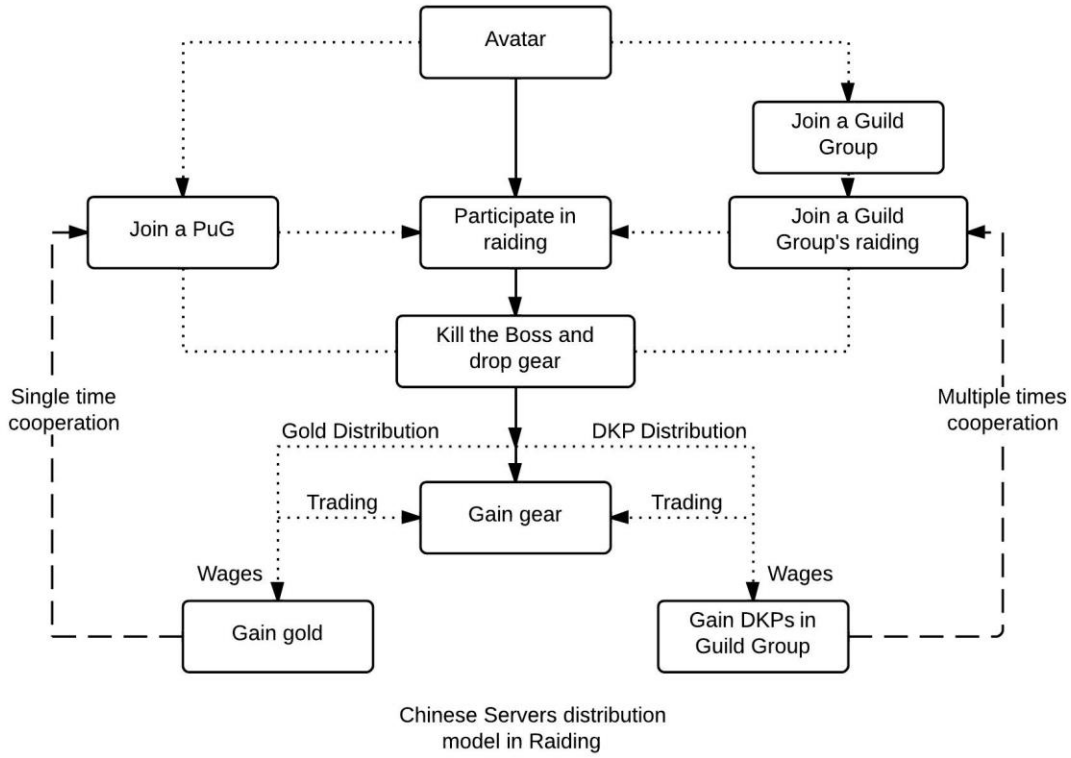

Figure 4.1 Distribution models of raiding on Chinese servers.

As the diagram shows (Figure 4.1), the solid lines in the middle are the compulsory procedure designated in the game, which conveys the processes required to acquire gear. The dotted lines are the procedures set up by the players autonomously. In the diagram, PuGs and Gold raids, Guild Teams and DKP raids are not inextricably connected. Players can freely choose different combinations. The only thing required is to participate in raiding. Players' emergent social conventions complicate the whole process around these simple rules.

In a PuG gold raid, the loot dropped by the bosses (the advanced monster in the raid) will be auctioned. Every player can join the auction as long as he needs this loot, without any job and class restriction. The raid leader will gather all the gold from buyers, which is then collectively called the wage, and distribute the wage evenly to all the raid members as wages when the raid is finished. Sometimes the raid leader and the tank

might receive some extra subsidy. However, if any member is deemed unproductive or was unable to contribute to the team in a meaningful way, then the member would not get paid. Both Chinese and Taiwanese players use same terms to describe players' incompetent actions: *Tang Shi*, which means to die in the battle from the beginning to the end. *Hua Shui*, which means to pretend to be hard working but actually counterproductive. *Di Shu Chu*, meaning low DPS. *Tuan Mie*, which means complete wipeout, in which case the whole raid team is killed.

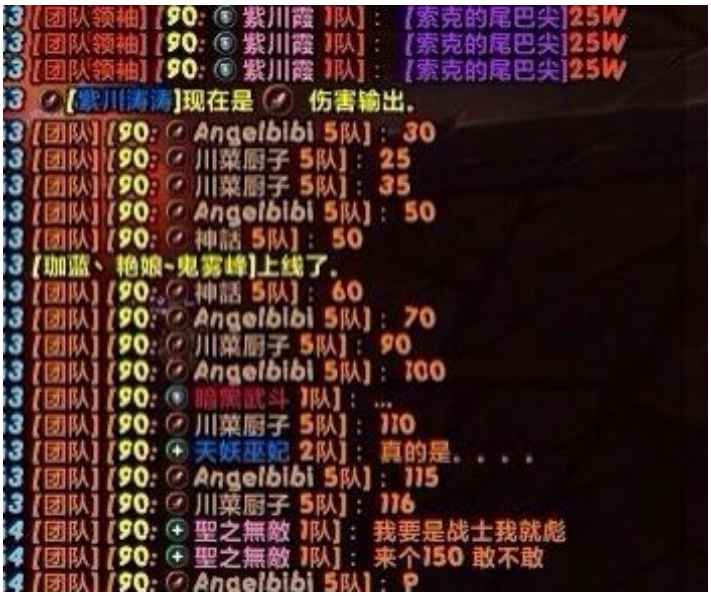

Figure 4.2 An auction on Chinese server, the price of the loot starts from 250,000 and goes to 1.16 million (gold), which is approximately $360 in real money trading (provided by interviewees).

Most teams will choose open outcry auction to sell the loot. These open outcry auctions are called "English auctions", which takes place in the local or team chat channel. The auctioneer (usually the raid leader) opens the auction by announcing a suggested opening bid in the general chat or team chat, and then accepts increasingly higher bids from the buyers (team members) with a possible interest on certain items. Open outcry auctions are "open" or fully transparent as the identities of all bidders are

disclosed to each other during the auction. The highest bidder at any given moment is considered to have the standing bid, which can only be displaced by a higher bid from a competing buyer in text chat. If no competing bidder challenges the standing bid within a given time frame, the standing bid becomes the winner, and the item is sold to the highest bidder at a price equal to the bid (English Auction, 2013). Figure 4.2 shows an example of Chinese players bidding up the price from 250,000 to 1.16 million (gold), which is approximately $360 in real money trading.

However, open outcry auctions might lead to potential misbehaviors. Some interviewees mentioned their unpleasant experiences in PuG gold raids. As one player said,

> I joined the PuG gold raids because I knew all the raid members and we were friends. There was a time when the Boss dropped a ring; on the team, both the Priest and I wanted to acquire the ring. Our bids were very closed to each other. However, the Priest's boyfriend, a Death Knight, was also in that team and he bid a price way higher than any of us. Eventually he bought that ring and presented it to his girlfriend. I was annoyed because it was an unfair outnumbered competition.

The same player also added:

> I sometimes played as a shill in a PuG to bid up prices. When I knew the other bidder wanted the gear so much, I might bid up the price. I might bid up the price. Usually I will choose the equipment that both the other players and I wish to loot, usually the case in which the other party members yearn

the item more. I must bid up the price inconspicuously or otherwise, others might figure out my intentions and doubt my integrity. The reason I bid up prices is because I want to earn more wages. At the beginning, if the item is in great demand, the wage is high. Soon, as time progresses, the demand is lessen and the wage decreased, therefore, extra income is always a comfort. ----David (CoT)

Another player said as follows:

I know some people will hire a shill in his team. The shill is taking the risk that he might buy that equipment himself eventually, because sometimes he bids the price too high and his opponents give up. You know, gold raids usually run every week, players are not fools, if they know the raid leader has a scandal of bidding up, no one will join his gold raids. Therefore usually bidding up is not very common to see, at least on the surface. ---- Bear (CoC)

Most people might mistakenly equate gold raids with PuGs, however, this is not accurate. Sometimes a guild might organize an internal gold raid team for the guild members. This usually occurs when the guild members want to raise their alternate characters' or some newbie (inexperienced or amateur) players' levels in a short period of time. They do not wish to continue to follow the DKP system because each time, the participants might be different. Some internal guild gold raids only charge a small amount of gold to the newbies who obtain the gear as a symbolic act. Sometimes a guild might organize a "for hire" raid for the team members to earn gold. In such cases, most of the raid members are from the guild, but participate as laborers. The raid leader will

recruit a few honchos (consumers) through the chat channel or through previous arrangement. “The honcho” can choose either *Tang Shi* (to die in the battle from the beginning to the end), *Hua Shui* (to pretend to be hard working but actually counterproductive), or co-work with the team. If the honcho chooses to co-work, the honcho must follow the raid leader’s commands and take part in combat with the boss. If the honcho chooses to *Hua Shui*, then the honcho may play at one’s own discretion, but he cannot take actions that will lead to a “group wipe” (i.e., death of the entire team). If the honcho chooses to *Tang Shi*, the honcho can become a corpse, which means that the honcho may die in the battle all the way. Besides these options, the honcho may do other things during the battle. For example, an interviewee said (Uchiha, CoC), “I will minimize the game and start watching films online since I paid them to raid for me.” The Priest in the team will revive him after the battle. The whole team will move forward to the next Boss, and the cycle repeats. A non-working honcho is often called a “carrier.” When allocating the loot, players follow several types of rules (Figure 4.3).

1. If the team has more than one honcho, two kinds of sub-rules come up. One is every player including the laborers in the team can bid. The other is only the honchos can bid. As long as all the honchos do not need this loot, the rest of the raid members can bid for it.
2. If the team has only one honcho, this is often called “block booking.” The honcho has to pay a certain amount of gold before the raid. Everything dropped in the raid belongs to the honcho. However, if none of the loot is suitable for

him, the honcho may not surrender the loot back for the initial gold deposit. Instead, the honcho may sell the loot to anyone who wishes to acquire it.

Wages are distributed evenly amongst all players that have actively participated in the raid. Sometimes the raid leader or the tank might have a bigger share as an extra subsidy. Carriers would not get paid. In a block booking gold raid, the consumer would not get paid, either.

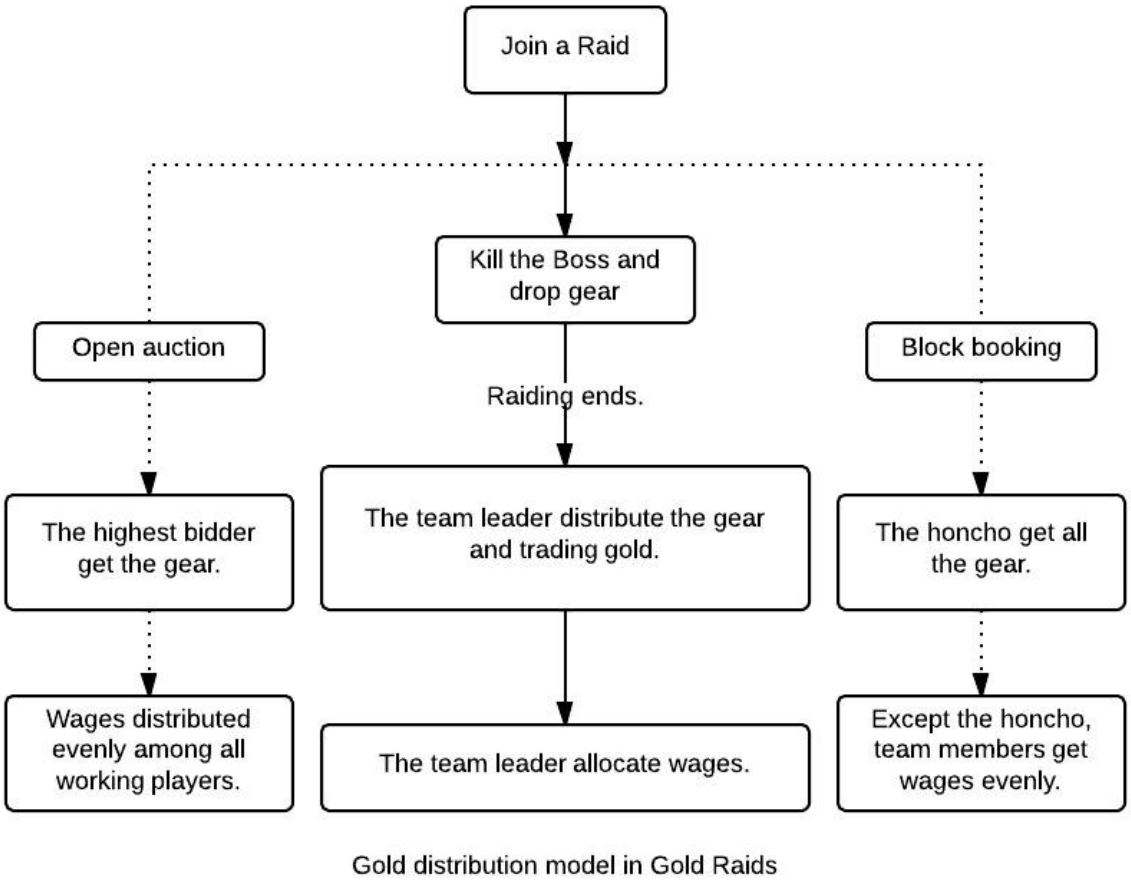

Figure 4.3 Gold raid distribution model

Gold raids occur once after the expansion has been released for some time. When the majority of the Guild members have already gained sufficient equipment, their battle effectiveness has been increased. Therefore, the fault tolerance of the raid has

also expanded. This means a strong team can hold positions for weak players as long as it has enough DPS to defeat the bosses.

Owing to the 2-year late release of the *Wrath of the Lich King* in China, when the expansion was finally updated on Chinese servers, most of the players had already experienced the expansion set's gameplay on other countries' servers. As a result, many players had already developed skills by the time this expansion was released in China. Gold raids also existed from the introduction of the expansion.

4.2 Dragon Kill Points (DKP) Model

Dragon kill points, also abbreviated as DKP, is another important distribution method for raiding (WoWWiki, n.d.). It is the very first endgame loot distribution system developed by Thot of the *EverQuest* guild, Afterlife, in 1999. It is named after the two raid bosses, both of whom were dragons (Afterlife, n.d.). Players earn DKP by joining in end-games (end-game refers to the part of the game where level advancement is no longer the goal and other activities take center stage) raids and spend them by acquiring equipment from end-game bosses. Player who join the raid and leave midway would not earn any DKP. DKP is a kind of achievement token that is only used within an individual guild. This means if players quit the fixed raiding team or the guild, their DKP cannot be admitted by new teams or new guilds. These strategies are to ensure the players' loyalty to the guild and their attendance while raiding. When one does not participate in the fixed raid team regularly, one earns less DKP and therefore weakens his competence with his teammates during loot distribution. When a fixed team

dismisses after the completion of a raid, the whole team member's DKP will be reset back to zero.

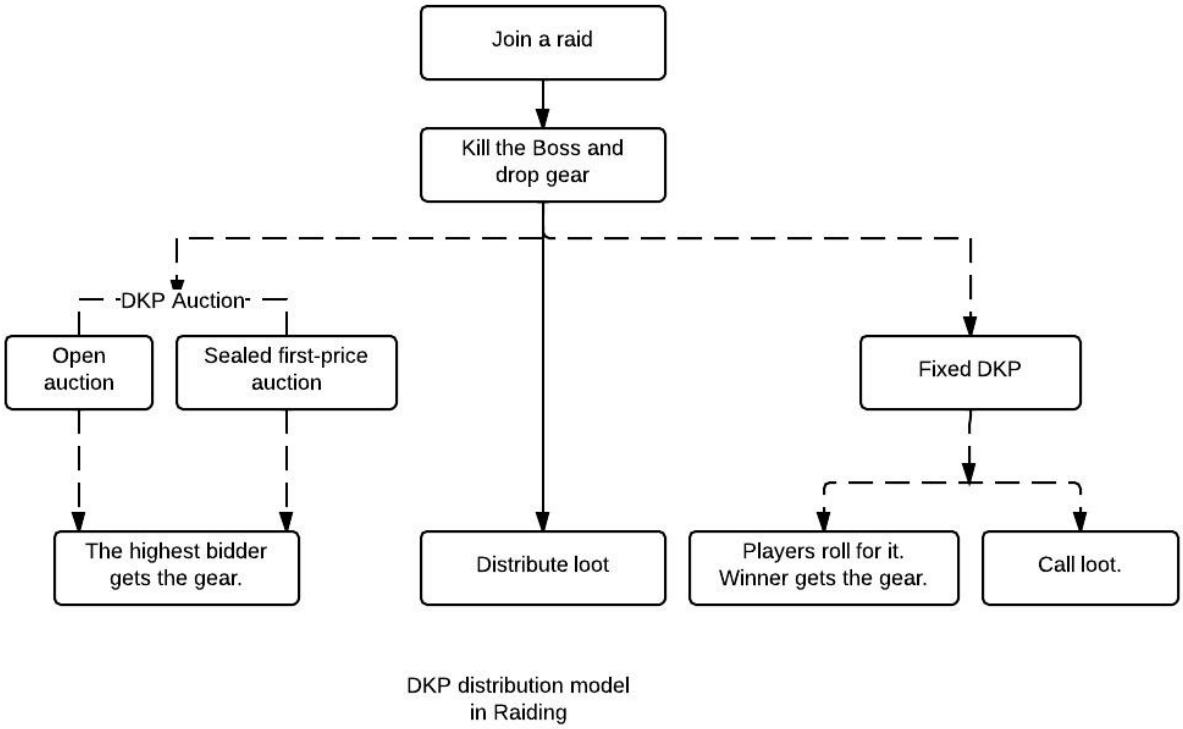

Figure 4.4 Different DKP methods on Chinese servers.

On Chinese servers, most of the guild teams use the DKP system as their priority distribution method for raiding. It is easy to earn DKP in all guild teams as long as players are diligent and actively participating. However, different guilds might have different social conventions for spending DKP (Figure 4.4). For example, although most DKP teams use auction to decide the distribution of the loot, the auction systems can be mainly divided into two categories; one is an open auction, the other is a sealed first-price auction. The DKP open outcry auction is the same as the gold raid open outcry auction. The highest bidder gets the loot. Instead of trading gold, the winner loses DKP to acquire his trophy. A consequence of an open outcry auction is that players overbid for items, which may potentially artificially increase the value of the item than

the price it is appraised to be. Some players might bid up the price on purpose to force players who really want to obtain the loot to spend extra DKP to acquire it. Then, these players can bid the next desired loot with a low DKP holding, since their competitor has become "poor" as a result of an inflated bid previously. To avoid internal conflicts and keep the team in harmony, sealed first-price auction has become the dominant auction in guild raid teams. A sealed first-price auction is easier than an open outcry auction. The auctioneer (usually the raid leader or a trustworthy team member) will announce a starting price and countdown from three to one to stop the auction in public or team text chat. Players only have one chance to bid the price during the countdown by sending their price to the auctioneer in private text chat. The highest bidder wins the loot. The advantage of sealed first-price auction is that players will only bid the appropriate price since they do not know each other's offer prices. However, it is possible that the auctioneer might be biased for a particular player, and helps him to bid the highest price. An open outcry auction is welcomed among gold raiders, for the highest price the players bid, the more income they will receive.

Other ways to consume DKP are very different from auctions. Some teams choose to give every item a fixed DKP price and rely on chance to determine who wins the loot. Players who want the loot roll dice. The winner will lose the DKP value and acquire the loot. This method seems relatively fair because everything is based on luck. However, not many teams adopt this method because sometimes the actual situation is contradicted to their ideal imagination. Although the rules are fair, people sometimes

deliberately break the rules for other particular reasons. One of my Chinese interviewees mentioned his experience in a roll DKP raid team.

> Once I was in a roll raid team, and the boss dropped equipment for the healers. A Priest whose gear score (an appraisal system in which the consolidation of all the player's items are given a number score based on the rarity and importance of items in the game) was 580 won the dice, however, the raid leader overlooked his victory and gave the equipment to a Shaman whose gear score was 569. Is he [the raid leader] wrong? I don't think so. From the raid leader's point of view, the consideration of the group holistically comes before the need and wants of one specific member who already holds a very high gear score. The Shaman having that new equipment will largely increase his healing ability than the Priest. However, the raid leader did, in fact, break the rules. Rules and teams, how can one ensure the balance of both? ---- Wong (CoC)

4.3 EPGP Model

One of my CoA interviewee (Weiwei) mentioned another allocated model used in her guild on an American server, which was called an EPGP model. The interviewee believed that compared to the DKP model, an EPGP model was more advanced and impartial. An EPGP model is based on the concept of effort points (EP) and gear points (GP). Effort points quantify the effort each member put towards mutual goals within the guild and gear points quantify what each member got back in return. Loot priority is computed as the quotient of the two; priority (PR) is equal to EP divided by GP

(PR=EP/GP). Another twist in EPGP that makes it different from other loot systems is the fact that EP and GP decay over time. Because of the decay, new members become equal under the system much faster. EPs decay at a set percentage after each raid, so with a 10% decay in about 15 raids, a veteran has about the same EP as a new member who has participated in five recent raids. This measure was taken to prevent EP hoarding and motivate guild members to participate in many raids. The only restriction for participation in a raid for new members is reaching the Minimum EPs in order to be eligible for loot (WoWWiki, n.d). Because the amount of EP directly correlates with attendance rate, if a player has not attended many raids, his EP will decay, and will be unable to purchase loot items. This model is used more frequently on American servers, but the scale is small. Most guilds are still using the DKP model. Other Chinese or Taiwanese players who played on Chinese or Taiwanese servers were asked whether they were aware of this model, in which case the answer across the board was no, with a few replying that although they knew what it was, they were not going to employ that system because it was so complicated to let every guild member understand the intricate process behind EPGP. Sometimes, players tend to keep the game simple even though they know a more advanced option.

4.4 Call Loot Model

Another distribution method is Call Loot. This method is uncommon and is usually not considered as a long-term policy in raiding. It usually happens in the initial phases of the game when a new expansion pack has just been released. Players are not familiar

with the new dungeons and their equipment falls behind even though they have already gained the best equipment in the previous expansion. To ensure that the battle efficiency and fighting capacity of the team is adequate, the MT (main tank) can acquire loot outside of the DKP auction process, and only spends the starting DKP price. For example, if a weapon's starting DKP is worth 400, the MT can acquire the loot by only spending 400 DKP without an auction. In return for this special offer, the MT has to promise his attendance in all subsequent raids until the majority of the team members become capable of defeating bosses. Although Call Loot model does not necessarily benefit individuals, it benefits the whole group over all. It proves that sometimes players sacrifice personal benefits in order to promote better ability of the group. Other similar self-sacrifice example also happens in raid teams that the team leader will allocate more gear to newer players with other players willing to sacrifice their own betterment.

4.5 One Need Multiple Greed Model

During my interview with players who immigrated from Chinese servers to Taiwanese servers, when I asked them: "What is the biggest difference between the two servers?" I always got the same answer: The distribution method of raiding is very distinct. In Taiwanese servers, their convention is called "One Need, Multiple Greed" model (Figure 4.5), which is a social convention that was not adopted into the software feature, but only followed by players spontaneously.

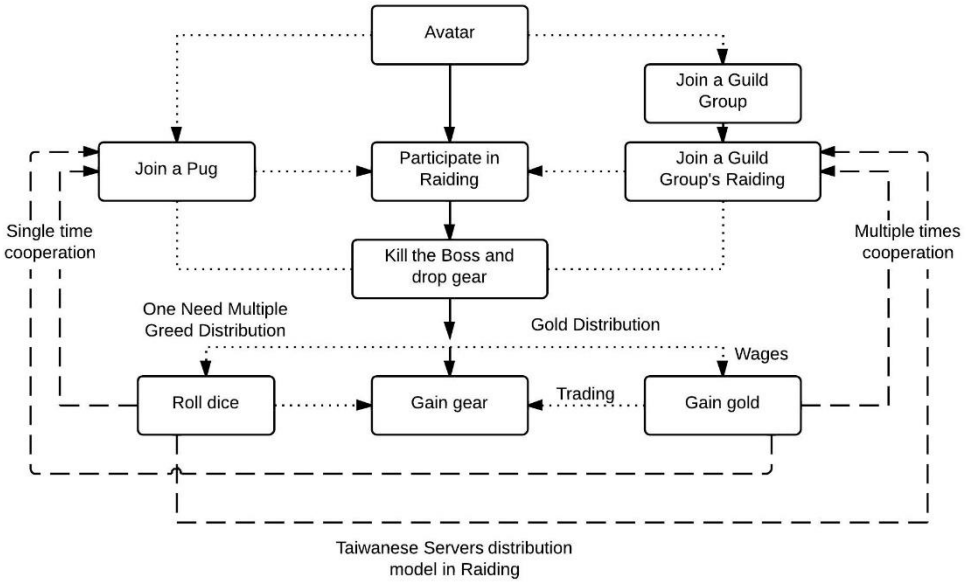

Figure 4.5 Taiwanese server distribution model in raiding before the immigrant waves.

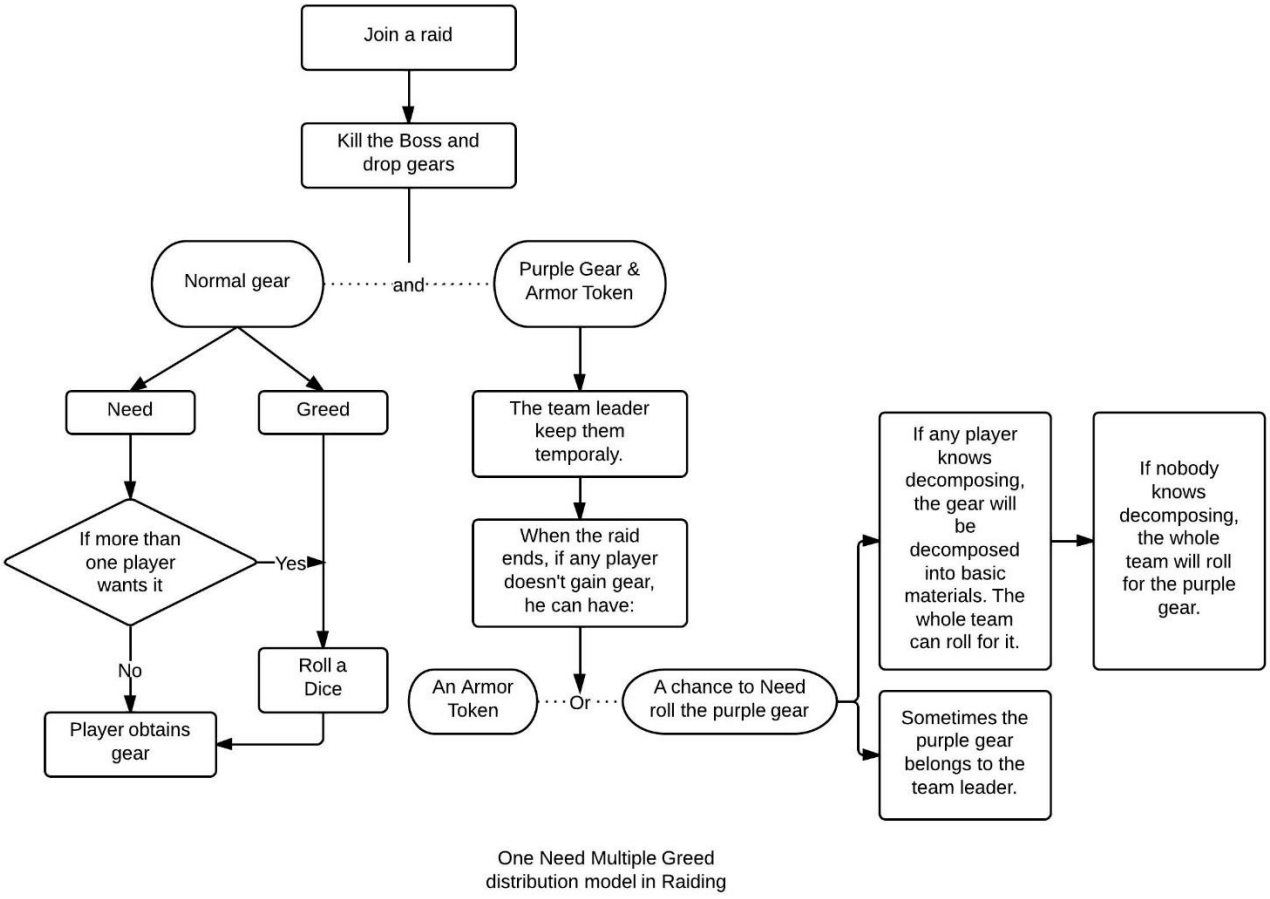

Figure 4.6 One Need, Multiple Greed model

In the One Need, Multiple Greed model, every time an item drops, players can roll virtual dice to determine who gets the drop. Players who roll on “Need” have a better chance to get the drop than players who roll on “Greed.” The social convention that has been adopted by Taiwanese players is that every player who gets one “Need” roll per raid. In a raid, players have only their chance to declare a “Need” demand for their wanted loot, and once they use their, they can only “Greed” roll in the rest of the raid (Figure 4.6). It is used in both guild team and PuG.

Specifically, this method has three fundamental principles.

1. When a raid team defeats bosses and obtains loot, if the loot is suitable for the players’ main talent specializations, these particular players can click on “Need”, roll dice, and determine ownership. In the game, “Greed” means “I would like to have that item if nobody needs it” (WoWWiki, n.d). “Need” means “I intend to use that item myself”, and “Need” generally expresses a higher priority than “Greed” (WoWWiki, n.d). The social convention on Taiwanese servers is that once a player does a “Need” roll and wins the loot, for the rest of the raid he can only “Greed” roll for the remaining gear. If he loses a “Need” roll, he still keeps his right to “Need” roll until he receives his desire loot.

2. If one player has already obtained more equipment than the other players, even if he wins the dice rolls, he will lose his priority. The raid leader will record and allocate the loot to an appropriate player, usually the secondary winner.

3. If the loot is not “Need” rolled, the suitable players can “Greed” roll (some loot is only suitable for some players in particular jobs). If still nobody “Greed” rolls, the

loot will be allocated to the tank at the end of the raid as a subsidy or allocated to a player who has enchantment skills that can decompose the item into basic materials. Once the item has been decomposed, everyone has the right to roll for its materials.

Over time, the sub-rules have been refined. Different raiding teams might follow different sub-rules. In general, the sub-rules might be varied depending on the raid leader, but the results of the raids are basically the same. For example, when a purple loot (loot is classified into color classifications, where purple is the highest quality of gear one may acquire through a raid) item was not “Need” rolled, or when an Armor Token was dropped by the bosses (Armor Tokens are items in inventory that can be exchanged for particular pieces of armor, which are typically obtained as raid rewards), the raid leader will keep them temporarily. At the end of the raid, if any player does not obtain anything from the raid, the player will either receive an Armor Token or a chance to roll for the purple loot. If still nobody wants the purple loot, the whole team will roll for it, or decompose it as materials; sometimes the raid leader will keep the purple loot as extra subsidy.

One Need Multiple Greed method has been adopted not only by group raids, but also by smaller parties, who also follow these same social conventions (a party can only have up to 5 players while a raid can have minimum 5 and maximum 25 players) (WoWWiki, n.d). When Taiwanese players are playing within parties in dungeons, they have a tacit agreement that items dropped by the bosses should belong to players who actually need it, and once his chance is used, he should not “Need” roll any more.

4.6 Suicide Kings

During interview, one American player (Stove) told me that players in his team were using free roll and another model, which is called “suicide kings (SK),” more frequently than DKP model. Players try to form a raid with equal distribution of classes so that not one character gets all loot.

The basics of the system are as follow:

1. Players are put in an ordered list, usually based on a random roll. The player roll highest number lists on the top. Multiple lists may be used, such as a list for all raid gear, and a list for Tier Tokens.
2. When a new player needs to be added to the list, usually the raid leader will insert him at the bottom of the lists.
3. When loot is dropped, the player who wants it and it nearest the top of the list wins the loot and goes to the bottom of the list. Players who do not want the loot can pass so other can have a priority.
4. Players who are not currently in the raid do not move up or move down in the lists. They also would not get any loot in the raid.
5. If nobody wants the item, it is up the raid leader to decide what to do with it.

Just like the participant told me that “players don’t want spending 30 minutes figuring the loot out.” This SK mode is very transparent and easy to maintain for both team leaders and team members. It has three advantages: 1) Loot distribution takes place very quickly; 2) veteran players cannot build a large DKP lead; thus, inflation can

be avoided; and 3) casual gamers who do not attend raiding very often still have opportunities to acquire loot.

This SK model is essentially very similar to One Need Multiple Greed model. The core of the two models is to guarantee every player can acquire loot by following a decently fair manner, especially for casual players or friends who do not want to stick to DKP model. Although the rules of the two models have some slightly differences, the results of the distribution are basically the same. It is very interesting that although American and Taiwanese players are playing *WOW* separately without many connections or communications, as long as they have the same concept of "fair play," they still develop their own but similar sub-rules spontaneously.

4.7 Cultural Conflicts and Merging between Chinese and Taiwanese Players

At the early stages of the Chinese – Taiwanese immigration, when the players of the two countries were playing together in randomly composed and short-lived dungeon parties, severe cultural conflicts became widespread. There were three areas of conflict in social conventions: Different methods for dividing up loot, differences in typing conventions of the two cultures (even though the spoken language is virtually the same, there were slight disparities), and standard expectations in terms of courtesy.

In terms of loot distribution, as the Chinese players were not familiar with the local conventions, they "Need" rolled everything just as they had on the Chinese servers, while the Taiwanese players choose "Greed" roll by default according to local

conventions. Therefore, the Chinese players obtained the loot they did not need, and they sold the items as subsidy for equipment mending. The Taiwanese players perceived this behavior as unfair and disrespectful to their in-game cultural and social order. Lin and Sun (2011) noted one Taiwanese player said *"*I no longer hit the 'Greed' button immediately after equipment is dropped; I wait to see what the others choose. If you hit 'Greed' I will followed with the same, if you hit 'Need' for something you don't really need, I will follow with 'Need', too.*"*

Another cultural conflict emerged pertaining to differences in typing conventions between Taiwanese and Chinese players. *Zhuyin* was created in the Republic of China in the 1910s. The *Zhuyin* typing convention was replaced by *Pinyin* in the People's Republic of China in the 1950s, but it is still widely used as an educational tool for Chinese computer input method in Taiwan (Bomopofo, 2014; Pinyin, 2014). All Chinese players used *Pinyin* typing convention to type simplified Chinese character when text chatting while Taiwanese players only understood traditional Chinese characters typed by *Zhuyin.*

More broadly, although Chinese and Taiwanese people speak the same language, the ways they type the characters into the computer are very different. Chinese is typed based on Mandarin pronunciations. The Chinese use the Latin alphabet to spell out the sound of the word, while the Taiwanese use special symbols to spell the sound. For example, the Chinese type "mèng" to input the simplified Chinese character "梦," which means "dream" in English, while the Taiwanese will type "ㄇㄥ" to get the traditional Chinese character "夢", which is literally the same as the simplified one).

When the Chinese players typed “4=1 need a MS” for party recruitment in chat channel (which means “four players are ready, looking for one Priest.” The equation sign is pronounced the same as “wait” in Chinese; MS is a *Pinyin* abbreviation for Mu Shi, which means Priest in Chinese), the Taiwanese players could not understand the meaning.

Because of the large influx of Chinese players, Taiwanese players felt their homeland was being invaded by Chinese and they became the minority on their own servers. Some Taiwanese players chose to fight back by typing *Zhuyin* in chat channel. Some Taiwanese players posted their complaints on Taiwanese *WOW* forums, requiring Chinese immigrants to follow the local rules and use English abbreviations for terms used in *WOW*, if they wanted to keep playing in Taiwanese servers.

The third issue relates to politeness. Most Chinese players that have migrated to Taiwanese servers admired the Taiwanese players’ good manners when joining and leaving a party. They usually greeted “安安 (hi),” “拍謝 (thank you),” or “88 (bye-bye).” Almost all my CoT interviews mentioned the politeness of the Taiwanese players and how they even lined up when completing quests that required them to kill a certain mob. Taiwanese players would just spontaneously line up and wait for their turn, for the killed mob needed some time to re-spawn again when it was killed. They believed it was a real world social order and politeness that they should also obey in the game. However, when Chinese immigrant players first came to Taiwanese servers, they seldom noticed this convention, let alone follow it. Chinese players followed their “finder’s keepers” principle as they were on Chinese servers. Therefore they “jumped

the line" and killed the target mob whenever they saw it, regardless of the lining up policy taken up by Taiwanese players, which enraged them and later resulted in an anti-Chinese boycott in the game.

Through this study, I have made an interesting finding; Taiwanese players hold the perception that Chinese players are not as polite as Taiwanese players, but are highly skilled. While Chinese players admire Taiwanese players' politeness, Taiwanese players admire Chinese players' skills. As a result, they cooperated with each other because they began to see each other's merits.

Eventually, most Chinese players were willing to adjust their conventions to adapt to the "local culture" of the Taiwanese servers. They sorted out the English abbreviation and utilized commonly used Taiwanese words and expressions, and wrote threads on Chinese *WOW* forums to tell the new immigrants to respect and obey the local rules. However, one of my Chinese participants mentioned that language was still a problem.

> The abbreviations problems are easy to solve, as long as everyone plays together, they can finally understand what these mean. Nowadays not many players insist using Pinyin abbreviation on Taiwanese servers. Nevertheless, our Chinese players still cannot understand *Zhuyin* because we have never encountered it. When Taiwanese players type *Zhuyin* in the raid channel, I am not sure whether they are cursing me. ----Uchiha (CoT)

According to my interviews, in the early stage of *WOW (*before *The Burning Crusade* expansion when the Chinese players immigrated to Taiwanese servers*)*, the local Taiwanese players adopted "One Need, Multiple Greed" as their main distribution

method. Before Chinese players went to Taiwanese server, guild groups seldom adopted the DKP system because the population of Taiwanese players was relatively small; sometimes they could not even form a fixed raid team (the raid team used to require the participation of 40 players). After the migration of Chinese players to Taiwanese servers, some guilds have the capabilities to form a 40-player raid team, but gold raids became more popular.

The Taiwanese gold raid was slightly different from the Chinese gold raid. Usually on Taiwanese servers, no block booking occurs, and everyone can bid. Hence all of the 25 members can split the gold. In Taiwan, when the wage is distributed, the raid members will line up spontaneously in and orderly fashion and let the raid leader trade with them one by one (Figure 4.7); while in Chinese servers this scenario might be chaotic.

Figure 4.7 The Taiwanese players in a gold raid are lining up to receive wages from the raid leader (Sean, 2009).

In interviews with players, I found that Chinese players believed that Chinese immigrants brought gold raids to the Taiwanese servers. However, the Taiwanese players insisted that gold raids already existed before the immigrations. To investigate how gold raids was introduced to Taiwanese servers might be too difficult to trace back, but interviews, blog posts, and threads on Taiwanese game forums confirmed that gold raids did exist before the Chinese players arrived on Taiwanese servers.

Since the immigrant waves brought large amount of Chinese players, the Taiwanese players began to choose either to adjust themselves or assimilate the Chinese players. Some Taiwanese guilds catered to the Chinese members and adopted DKP system, mostly because these new members were skilled in raiding and they could lead them through difficult dungeons; some guilds kept their conventions and convinced Chinese players to use One Need Multiple Greed.

Some Chinese guild groups moved entirely to Taiwanese servers. These guild groups were aimed at acquiring experiences in new dungeons and winning official honor, First Kills (Golub, 2009) (given to the highly skilled team that is first to kill the boss in each new expansion, worldwide), when the Chinese servers updated new expansion in the future. Lin and Sun (2011) also mentioned that "… a large number of individual players living in China went searching for recruitment posts from Chinese guilds that were already located on Taiwanese servers—a strategy they called 'seeking relatives and depending on them.'" In other word, the Chinese players on Taiwanese servers sought only Chinese players to play with. Initially, these guild groups tended to keep their DKP systems. They did not need extra players from outside the guild because

they had already formed a fixed team. Over time, they became highly-skilled players. However, as the update in Chinese servers was still far away, they became better acquainted with Taiwanese players and their unbreakable Chinese league gradually weakened. Finally, they began to open up to new raiding members and new distribution models.

Nowadays, most of the raid teams on Taiwanese servers still use gold raids and One Need Multiple Greed as their main distribution methods. Some Taiwanese players simply use Roll raids to substitute One Need Multiple Greed raids for the sake of efficiency. DKP model is rarely seen in the Taiwanese servers. This is because most of the players in the Taiwanese servers prefer "fun and leisure" as the main purpose for gaming, and believe that DKP bring too much tension and rigidity.

Some Taiwanese players use the term "happy raid" to describe gold raids and roll raids. Happy raids do not hold a strict standard of raid's overall progress and complete raids at a leisurely pace. The raid members are pleasant and accept multiple wipes and do not blame on each other; everyone raids for fun. Some players develop their own roll conventions and even create their own rules for allocating the loot.

> When we moved to the Taiwanese server, our team was full and we choose roll raid. We did not want to be that serious [using DKP] because all the team members are friends. Our rule is a little bit different than the other teams. Instead of the player who rolled the dice for the highest score getting the loot, in our team, the one whose number is most close to 50 gets the loot. This is because some people are always in bad luck and they can never win normal

rolls, so we change the rules to make sure that everyone is happy. ---- Orient (CoT)

The Taiwanese players describe the difficult process of defeating bosses from newly released dungeons as “cultivation.” Since DKP raids usually occur during this time period, the Taiwanese players might call DKP raids as “cultivation raids.” The cultivation raid is more serious and the raid leader always requests the team’s fully attention and high DPS. Some Taiwanese interviewees also mentioned that Chinese players are more serious when raiding.

I think the Chinese players holds high value for skill. For instance, they really care about whether you have an idea of “what to do,” how to contribute high DPS, and a pick-and-roll tactic. I am not saying that our Taiwanese players do not care about these skills, but the Chinese players emphasize these more than Taiwanese players. I guess that’s the reason why so many first-class players are Chinese. ---- Orange (ToT)

Some Chinese raiding teams stress the importance of high DPS; the raid leader will blame me seriously if I didn’t play well. Those Taiwanese raiding teams I have cooperated with were much more laid back. However, I have to admit that Chinese raiding teams are more powerful than Taiwanese raiding teams. ---- Aven (ToT)

During conversation, Chinese players were using the word “away from keyboard (AFK)” differently from American players. While American players use the word “AFK” to represent the physical act of leaving their computers and will be back later,

Chinese players are using it for both the original and an alternate meaning, which is "leave or quit the game." Some Chinese players used this word, for example: "I have been AFK for a while" or "I am half-AFK the game," which means that they have not logged on to the game recently or they are not logging in as frequent as before. I asked them whether they knew the true meaning of AFK and all of them answered correctly. They just decided to use the word for alternate meaning because it was precise and easy understandable by other players, even though they knew they were using the word incorrectly.

4.8 Attitudes to Real-Money Trading (RMT) and Gold Farmers

Gold farmers, or Chinese gold farmers, are pervasive in the Chinese *WOW* game environment. Gold farmers are players who stay online for extremely long hours and farm mobs (may be automated) for the purpose of selling game gold they accumulate for real-world money, which is against the terms of service because *Blizzard* considers all gold and items in the game to be its property. Because many of these players are predominantly Chinese, the expression "Chinese gold farmer" is often used. Dibbell (2007a, 2007b) also wrote about Chinese gold farmers in his book and article for *The New York Times*. He documented how these gold farmers worked and lived, and how some former gold farmers moving their business from farming to leveling. Farming gold is not only limited to Chinese servers, but also prevalent on servers in other countries. Players who hated Chinese gold farmers created a video called *Ni Hao* and posted it on Youtube to insult them. Nardi (2010b) went to China to investigate the real

life of Chinese gold farmers and discovered that their lives were not the same as those that the general population believed they had.

Players are also holding different attitudes to the behavior of real-money trading (RMT). Some American interviewees I met hated RMT and would not forgive friends who bought game gold from gold farmers. Some interviewees were neutral. They neither condemn it as evil nor approve of it. They believe it is reasonable since it exists. Some interviewees advocated RMT and bought gold from gold farmers. These players believe RMT was an efficient and convenient method that facilitated the process of acquiring gold to purchase wanted items or loot. RMT freed the players from investing a lot of time and efforts on repeating game behaviors, such as raids.

Before the initial interview sessions commenced, the assumption was that Chinese players are open-minded to the concept of RMT compared to American players. Surprisingly, every player holds their own opinions regarding RMT, with no apparent influence due to nationality. The players' own personal judgment and morals decides their standpoint on this issue. However, almost all the interviewees said that they hated the gold farmers' indirect method of gold farming, where hotkeys and third party programs control the avatars and farm gold, even if the actual real life player is AFK, so to speak. Players were hampered by the algorithm-controlled avatars due to the fact that they would steal gold from players that are actively farming up gold. Players felt it was unfair because, while they put time and effort into gold farming and take the game seriously, these automatic-farming avatars were farming indirectly. Ironically, these players find bothersome and tedious that there exists these automated gold farmers, but

at the same time, enjoy the benefits of such methods. On one hand, they are enjoying the conveniences provided by the gold farmers that are using real money to buy their labor that bore fruit. On the other hand, they hate the process of robotically collecting game gold by the gold farmers because it impedes their experiences of enjoying the game.

To a greater extent, Chinese players are more tolerant of gold farmers, which might have been influenced by earlier Korean MMOGs and its Chinese followers and in which items can be purchased with real-money. Before immigration, Taiwanese players disliked RMT and killed gold farmers in game. However, through the gradual influence of the newly-joined Chinese players, they began to accept RMT by buying gold or participating gold raid, but they preferred to buy gold from special RMT websites rather than from gold farmer characters (Actually, these websites were also run by the gold farmers, or related organizations.). After all, it seemed to provide more security. Although American players do not oppose RMT since it helps them earn gold, they still hate gold farmers, mainly because these characters are annoying and destroying the balance of the game.

4.9 Attitudes towards “Newbies”

Players in different countries are also holding different attitudes to newbies, especially regarding raiding. Usually, no matter which countries’ server, as long as the newbie was in his guild team, the newbie would be treated kindly. Even though he did not know what to do in the raid, the team leader would still explain to him patiently if

he was a quick learner or had a good learning attitude. However, in Chinese servers, if the newbie was in a PuG, he might be kicked out of the team immediately if he admitted that he knew nothing about the raid. If he pretended he knew, but made mistakes throughout the raid, his mistakes would lead to a seriously scolding from the raid leader. The reason for this is that guild raid leaders have the responsibility to train newbies, but the PuG raid leaders are not held responsible to do so. The latter's goal is to go through the raid and defeat all the raid bosses as soon as possible, and will try to get rid of any chances that might lead to failure or impediment. Gold raid leaders might welcome the newbies if he is a honcho or a carrier. To sum up, on Chinese servers, newbies without high-level friends or a guild's support find it difficult to survive because they are disliked, because of their inadequacy and lack of knowledge about the game, so they have to be independent. By contrast, on Taiwanese servers, veterans (oldies) are mostly warmhearted and they will patiently teach newbies how to perform correctly in raiding, even in a PuG. American players seem to have taken the middle ground, since evidence pertaining to both attitudes to newbies have been recorded.

4.10 Recruitments for Raids

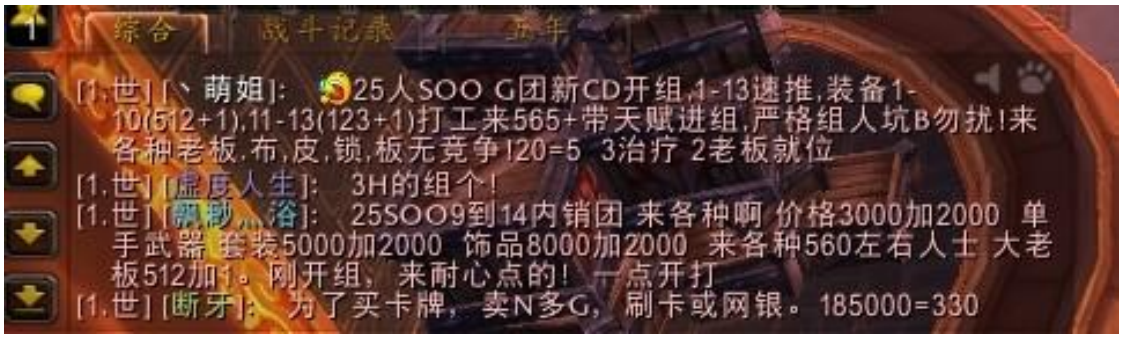

Figure 4.8 Gold raid advertisements in a Chinese server (provide by interviewees).

The Chinese and Taiwanese gold raid leaders use the same method to recruit players: publishing advertisements in chat channels. The advertisements are always long and detailed, for example, a recruit advertisement might look like this (see Figure 4.8): “John’s 25 man Gold Raid HSOO-No.10, equipment 3W4W5W, welcome all class carriers, need workers 2T3H8DPS, starts@3PM.”

This advertisement looks like a code but it is easy for players to understand. John is the name of the raid leader because most of the raid leaders market themselves as brands. “HSOO” is short for *Heroic (level) Siege of Orgrimmar*, an abbreviation of a dungeon. “–No.10” means that the raid leader has ability and that he has promised to defeat the first ten bosses in the raid. “Equipment 3W4W5W” means the prices of the loot are different. “W” is short for *Wan* in Chinese and means 10,000 gold in the game. Normal loot and one-hand weapons will have a starting price of 30,000 in gold. Armor and Tier token will have a starting price of 40,000 in gold. Weapons and trinkets will have a starting price of 50,000 in gold. Although the team leader, John, welcomes all class carriers; he still needs some laborers to make sure the raid can run smoothly, he needs 2 Tanks, 3 Healers, and 8 Damage Dealers. The raid will starts at 3pm, so players who want to join his gold raid should message the raid leader. Once John has confirmed the raid members, the player will have a position in his gold raid. Chinese raid leaders rarely post recruit threads on forums and usually do not have fixed text-based rules. If players ask for details before the raid, the raid leader usually answers orally via a voice tool or by in-game messaging. Sometimes players do not ask for a confirmation of the rules because they already assume that the rules most commonly practiced will be

followed by default. However, when conflicts arise during the progression of the raid between the raid leader and the members, it is likely that players will consider the raid leader a cheater.

In fact, the worst situation in a gold raid was not a conflict, but a "black gold" raid (Nardi, 2010a, p. 183). Gold raids sometimes turned into black gold raids in which the raid leader recruits players to form a PuG but ultimately keeps all the gold for himself. Instead of handing out wages, the raid leaders would immediately logoff, leaving the unwittingly players empty-handed. It is also possible that a whole guild would organize a black gold raid, which would greatly hurt the guild's reputation. When a black gold raid occurs, Chinese players will spam the general chat channel to broadcast the names of raid leaders or the guilds who conducted these black gold raids; Taiwanese players will report it to a Blizzard Game Master (official employees of *Blizzard* that monitor the game for healthy and fun practices; and administer punishments to those who impede the gaming experience of others) and post a thread on forums to warn other players. If all the victims of a black gold raid report to a *Blizzard*'s Game Master, the Game Master will forcefully confiscate the loot and wages from the raid leader, and may even suspend or ban the raid leader's account if necessary.

4.11 Gold Raids on American Servers

On United States servers, the most commonly used distribution methods are DKP raids and Roll raids. The former are usually connected to guild groups and the latter one are usually adopted by PuGs. The Roll raids here are not the same as the Taiwanese

Roll raids mentioned before. American Roll raids do not strictly follow "One Need, Multiple Greed," and normally, players can always choose a "Need" roll as long as the dropped gear is appropriated to them.

Although Nardi (2010a) stated that on United States servers, she did not observe any gold raids, it has now become a widely accepted North America practice formally called Gold-DKP (GDKP). A Chinese interviewees (Alexia, CoA) also claimed that when he was playing *WOW* on American servers in 2011, he did not know of any GDKP play on his servers. However, when "GDKP" is searched on the official US *WOW* forum, hundreds of results were displayed, and even recruitment threads were posted in 2011. Another interviewee (Embrace, CoA) mentioned that he had seen GDKP on United States servers in 2008 or 2009, though unfortunately, he could not provide any evidence to verify his claim. A discussion thread posted in 2009 by American players relating to GDKP was also discovered on another website (Figure 4.9). It is possible that these players who have read this thread introduced GDKP to some servers, yet it is still completely unheard of on others. One American interviewee who was still playing *WOW* told me that both DKP and GDKP had been out of date in his servers, but some guilds run GDKP for more profits (monetary benefits) from the raid.

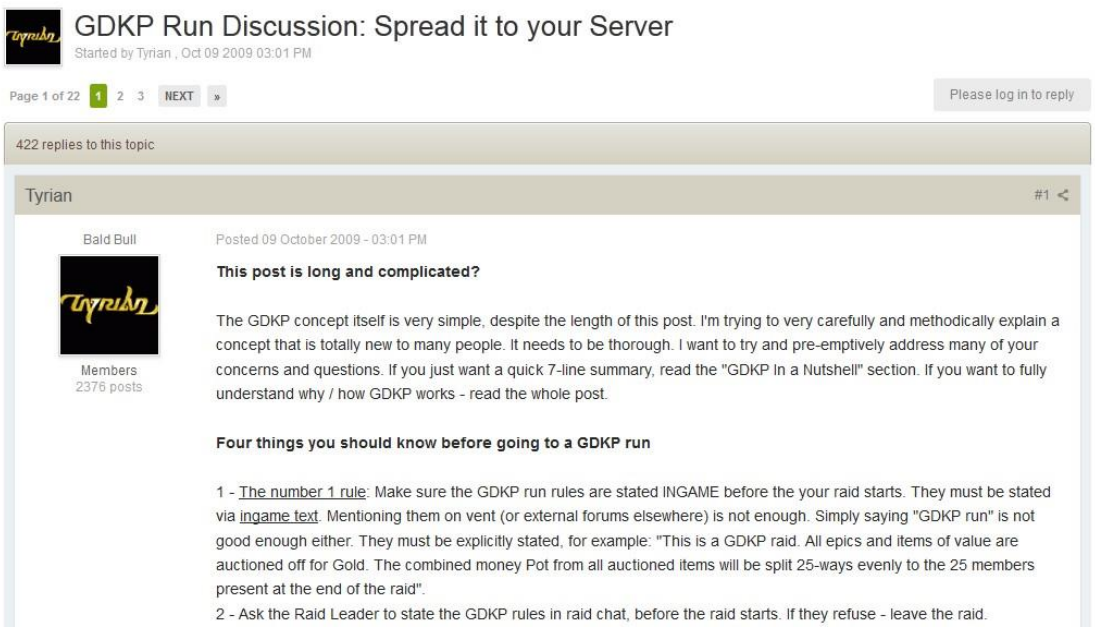

Figure 4.9 A GDKP run discussion posted in 2009 (Tyrian, 2009, October 9).

One of my interviewees (Dora, CoA) mentioned a phenomenon worth noting. She is a Chinese player on a United States server that is largely populated compared to other servers. She said that many Chinese players were playing on that server and typed in Chinese in the chat channel. On her server, GDKP was still very popular. The GDKP advertisements (Figures 4.10 and 4.11) were also in Chinese because most of the GDKP on the server was held by Chinese organizations, either guild groups with abundant experience, or overseas "gaming workshops" (Dibbell, 2007b) from China. Gaming workshops are usually formed by experienced players who play *WOW* for hire. Gold farmers, usually members of the gaming workshops that use high tech mods to operate their character automatically. Instead of posting threads on forums as other American GDKP leaders do, the Chinese GDKP leader follow their own cultural conventions by using a chat channel to broadcast their services to the potential Chinese customers.

Figure 4.10 One Chinese advertisement on a United States server, targeting Chinese players (provided by interviewees).

Figure 4.11 Another Chinese advertisement on a United States server, targeting Chinese players (provided by interviewees).

These advertisements imply that they are held by gaming workshops or skilled groups. Not only do they supply GDKP, but they also market pets, mounts, gold, and PVP equipment, and even offer level-up services. These services cater to players who have large amounts of cash but who do not want to expend the effort required to acquire high quality gear. If players do not have time to participate in a GDKP raid, the gaming workshops will operate their accounts, level the characters, and collect loot for them, as long as the players pay a big reward. The reward can be real money such as USD, CNY (Chinese currency), or game currency, such as gold.

Figure 4.12 An answer to whether players in the server do GDKP. Blood Legion is one of the top guild groups in the world (Blizzard Forum, 2013, July 11).

Although American players run GDKP, it is less common to see them broadcast recruitment in the chat channel and they are usually held by highly-skilled guild groups or capable individuals (Figure 4.12). One interviewee (Dora, CoA) told me that the number of the teams is small, because only two to three guild groups have the ability to run GDKP. It is also possible that the rarely seen in-game broadcast is due to the small number of GDKP groups.

Figure 4.13 A GDKP raid held by the guild group mentioned in Figure 4.12 (Blizzard Forum, 2014, January 19).

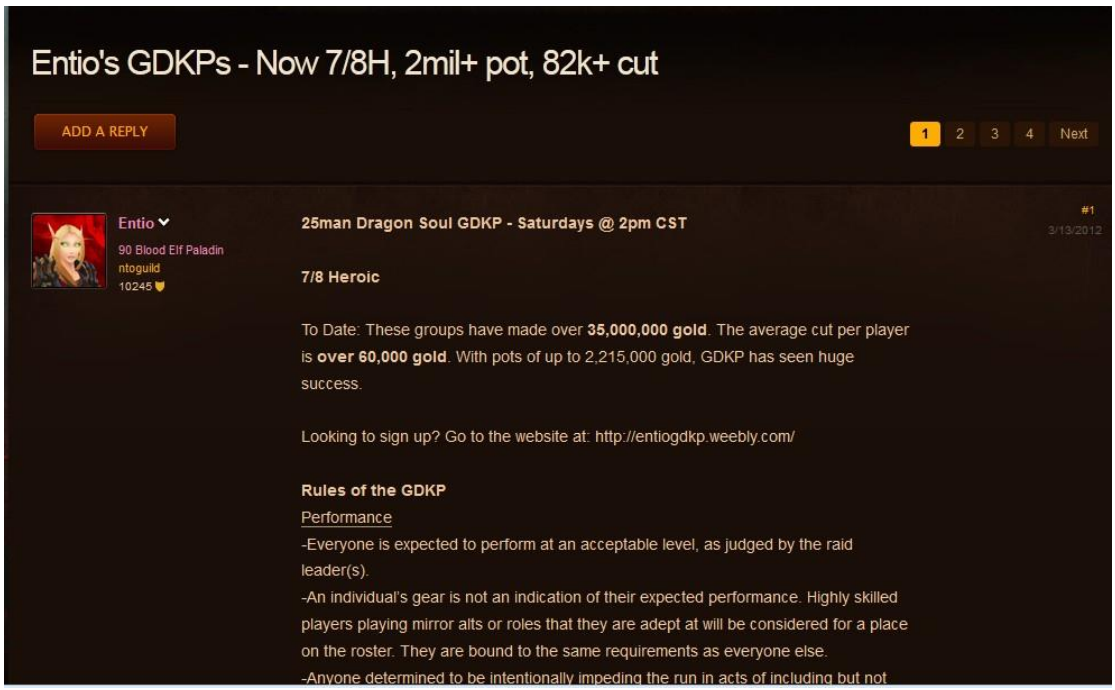

Figure 4.14 A recruitment thread posted on WOW forum (Blizzard, 2012, March 13).

On American servers, to recruit players for GDKP group, the American GKP raid leader needs to post threads on forums and specify every details regarding the GDKP (Figures 4.13 and 4.14). The details usually include the time, the name of the dungeon, requirements, the GDKP rules, distribution methods for items and wages (in American servers , wage is dubbed as "the Pot" (Tyrian, 2009)), and the starting and minimum bid prices for each kind of loot. Every GDKP group might have different rules that players are expected to read, understand, and accept the rules before signing up. It is also the players' responsibility to require the raid leader to state the GDKP rules before the raid begins. The rules should be stated via in game texts, instead of voice chat or websites, and it must be explicitly stated. For instance: "This is a GDKP raid. All epics and items of value are auctioned off for Gold. The combined money Pot from all auctioned items will be split 25-ways evenly to the 25 members present at the end of the raid" (Tyrian, 2009). If players forgot to ask for rules before the raid, and the raid

leader did not split the Pot at the end of the raid, reports to the Game Master might be invalid.

After the initial interviews, the term “GDKP” was searched on official *Blizzard* forums. Recruitment threads posted by American guild groups and their respective rules were written in detail (Figure 4.15). Recruiters also updated their progress weekly on the same thread, including the Pot size and specification, average income, and the number of Bosses they have defeated. Sometimes, they also mentioned the current job demand of the team, providing new opportunities for players who wish join.

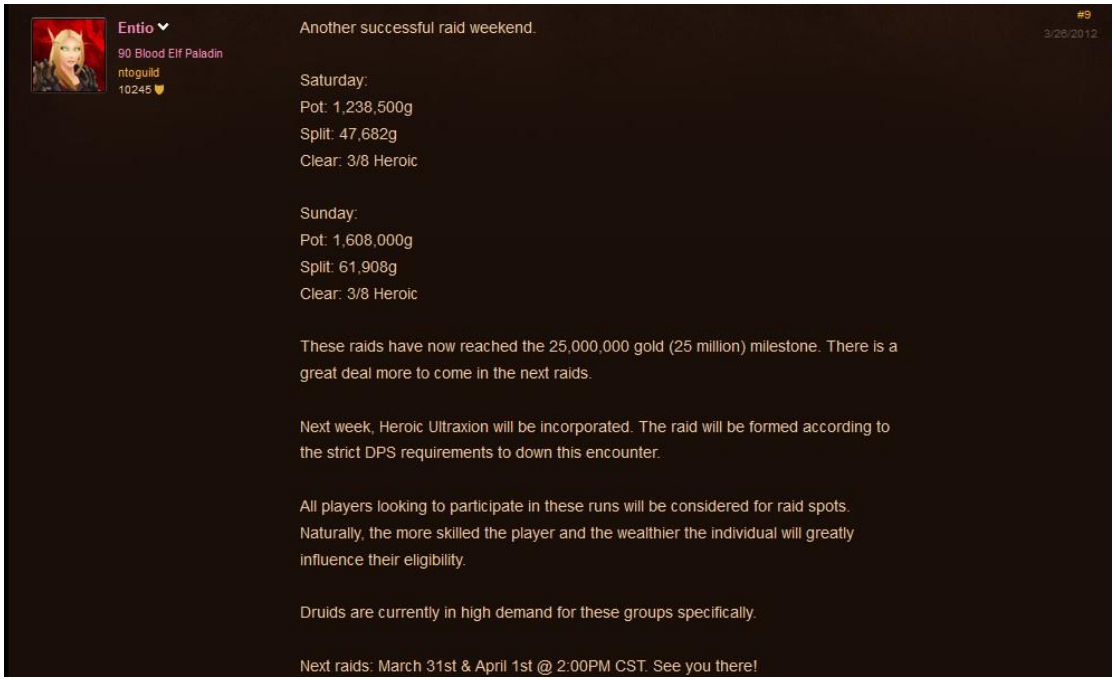

Figure 4.15 A weekly update by GDKP raid leader after each raid (Blizzard, 2012, March 13).

4.12 Conclusion

Players handle distribution methods differently based on internal and external software of *WOW*. For example, DKP and EPGP rely on external software (plug-ins). Since DKP and EPGP are usually used by guild groups as long-term policies, guild

officers and team leaders are in charge of recording players' DKP or EPGP and updating the scores to internal guild forums. When players want to check their scores, they have to browse websites instead of finding the scores in game. Gold raid is also recorded by team leaders with external materials, but the material itself can be very arbitrary. The main goal of gold raid is to earn gold and buy loot. Therefore, all the information the team leader needs to remember are the prices and buyers, which are all disposable information. In this case, most of the team leaders only use paper or notepad to write down these prices and names, and use calculator to sum up the Pot and divide it to team members at the end of raids. American team leaders of gold raids usually update the details to the thread they posted on *Blizzard* forums as advertisement. Call Loot, One Need Multiple Greeds, and Suicide Kings are all ran by players based on internal game mechanics and social conventions. In some raid teams, team leaders allow players to keep their rights to hit bottoms on the distribution interface as long as they obey his order (e.g., When he decides to allocate a loot to a player, only this particular player is allowed to hit "Need" and other players can only hit "Greed" or "Pass."). Players have to behave themselves and not break the rules deliberately. However, when disobedient behaviors does occur, no compulsory force can be applied to punish the rules-breaker or force him to give back the loot to the right person. To avoid such a situation, team leaders usually change the authority of division to make sure only he can operate the distribution system.

Blizzard also added new mechanics to prevent spiteful players for earning ninja loot from other players. For example, "Loot Specialization," a feature introduced in

Patch 5.3 (*Public Test Realm*, or *PTR*), allows players to choose their loot priority for their character to favor a particular specialization of loot. However, the features itself had some flaws that spiteful players can still use these flaws to snatch loot from other players. For example, Loot Specialization is invalid when characters do not reach the highest level of the game, so a greedy player can still ninja all loot in a party-raid (5-man raid) and sell it later for game gold. Besides, many players also evaluate the Dungeon Finder mechanic as not helpful. Players can form a party-raid team randomly through this method, without spending a lot of time looking for a team on chat channel. However, some players complain that it reduces the possible interactions that might take place between team members. In the past, a party-raid was an essential component of social interaction. When someone joined a team and waited for others, they chatted and made friends. However, when players use Dungeon Finder to form a team, the waiting process is gone and players are transmitted to the dungeon directly. As a result, players seldom communicate during the raid and leave immediately when it is over.

I used activity theory to interpret the distributions of raids (see Figure 4. 16). In this diagram, the subject is every individual player, the objects are loot, items dropped by monsters and bosses, and the community is a union of players, or more precisely, the raid team. The relationship between player and loot is mediated by "tools," which are the internal game mechanics (Need, Greed, and Pass) and external software or plug-ins (e.g., the DKP and EPGP score systems). The relationship between a player and a raid team is mediated by "rules," which are different types of social conventions standardized by local players as guidelines that every member of the team has to follow.

The relationship of raid team and loot is mediated by "division of labor," which are different roles that players taken during the raid. As Kuutti (1996) said, "each of the mediating terms is historically formed and open to further development." Finally, the object is transformed into the outcome: The loot and items are distributed by the raid leader (an executor of the players' common will) according to two principles—fairness and distribution according to work.

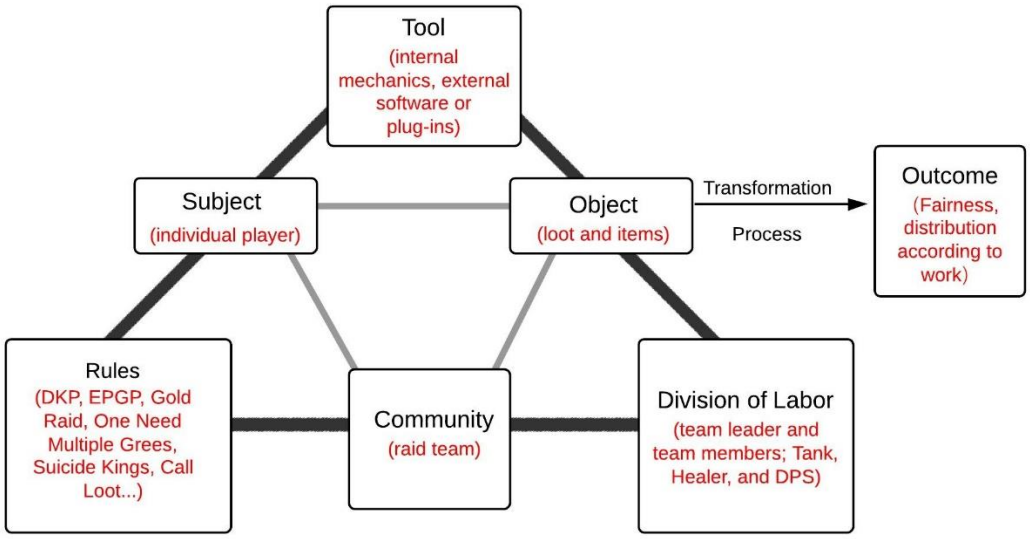

Figure 4.16 Basic structure of raid distribution based on Engeström's conceptualization.

Although on Chinese, Taiwanese, and American servers, players regard raiding as the primary method to acquire gear, the distribution models of raiding are very different on the regional servers (Tables 4.1 and 4.2). Over all, we can draw the conclusion that the idea of "fair play" and the negotiation of fair distribution of loot by players are culturally situated.

Game Servers	Rules	Recruitment	Members	Pot (wage)
Chinese	Rules are agreed by default. Players have to ask for details before the raid commences.	Posting advertisements in chat channels.	Every player may become the bidder. Honchos may choose not to work in the raid. Carrier exists.	Evenly distributed amongst players who have been actively participating. Carriers do not get paid.
Taiwanese	Rules are agreed by default. Players have to ask for details before the raid commences.	Posting advertisements in chat channels	Every player may become the bidder. They have to work in the raid. No carrier exists.	Evenly distributed amongst players who have been actively participating.
American	Rules are posted on recruitment threads. Players have to verify the rules before the raid commences.	Posting threads on Blizzard *WOW* forums	Every player may become the bidder. All members must actively participate in the raid. Most teams do not accept carriers.	Evenly distributed amongst players who have been actively participating.

Table 4.1 A comparison diagram of gold raids running on different servers

\raid team Game\types Servers\	Gold raid	Roll raid	DKP raid
Chinese	Commonly seen on PuGs and Guild Teams.	Commonly seen in PuGs.	Commonly seen in guild teams.
Taiwanese	Commonly seen on PuGs and Guild Teams.	Commonly seen on PuGs and guild teams. Particular Rule: One Need Multiple Greed.	Rarely seen on servers.
American	Occasionally seen on some servers on PuGs.	Commonly seen in PuGs.	Commonly seen in guild teams.

Table 4.2 A comparison diagram of different types of raid teams on different servers.

Generally, on Chinese server, players can choose whether to join a PuG or a Guild Group to earn gear by spending either game gold or DKP as external or internal currency. PuG, guild groups, gold raids, and DKPs raids are not necessarily bound together. Players have different options for hire, such as being a worker and a consumer simultaneously in a gold raid to earn and spend game gold, or being honchos to let other players work for him and spend money on loot. Why gold raids are so welcomed on Chinese servers is understandable. First, the total number of Chinese *WOW* players is immense; players are participating in an intense game environment, and are fighting for limited resources. Second, on the large scale, China is rapidly transitioning to a new economy; the nation as a whole is influenced by seeking monetary accomplishment and

fast returns on investments. The Chinese are affected by financial accomplishment, capitalism and the belief that the result is more important than the process. Third, before *WOW* became popular in China, most Chinese players were used to real-money trading modes for buying gear and items from playing Korean online games. This old tradition leads them to repeat the same behavior in *WOW.*

On Taiwanese server, the original local players have their special distribution mode, One Need Multiple Greeds, even when conducting a 25-man raids. However, through the combination of the immigrated Chinese WOW players, some Taiwanese guild group began to adopt DKP raids to better cooperate with the Chinese players. Taiwanese players also participate in gold raids, but the rules are slightly different than the Chinese counterpart. Players must be workers and consumers simultaneously. Two reasons for Taiwanese players preferring other raids over DKP raids are as follows. One, the total number of players on Taiwanese servers is comparatively small compared to American and Chinese servers. In the early stages of the game, Taiwanese players found it difficult to form a 40-person-fixed team to run dungeons weekly. Two, during the interview, the Taiwanese players expressed their preference to play for leisure and fun, rather than a competitive aspect that tends to appear on online games. The Taiwanese players believe that DKP raids will take away their freedom and add unnecessary restrictions to their gameplay due to the fact that DKP raids usually require strict attention to rules and regular attendance. When the Chinese immigrant players moved to Taiwanese servers, they did not follow the local conventions and resulted in protests from Taiwanese players. However, as time progressed, Taiwanese players realized that

Chinese players are highly skilled and Chinese players discovered that the Taiwanese players' politeness is worth practicing. The acknowledgement of each other's respect merits paved a path for harmonious gameplay and cooperation.

On United States servers, most teams are still primarily implementing DKP raids and Roll raids. They develop diverse rules for loot distribution, such as "EPGP" model, or "Suicide Kings." However, they do not have the "One Need, Multiple Greed" conventions, so players may possess multiple needs for a considerable amount of loot in raids. Presently, American players practice gold raids, and it is officially called GDKP. American GDKPs are more formal than the Chinese and Taiwanese counterparts because they usually have a detailed set of rules posted on the *Blizzard* forums. The recruitment for GDKP is also unique. Most GDKP raids only accept consumers that can also take on the role of workers, and carriers and honchos are not necessarily required. The reason why American GDKP has such detailed rules is probably related to United States' legal system. Everything is listed and can be traced back, which clears up a number of gray areas and ambiguities.

Chapter 5 - Social Interaction

In this chapter, I will mainly discuss two larger aspects of the social interaction behaviors among players: offline activities and online activities. Offline activities pertain to players' real world social gathering. Online activities can be categorized into three smaller components: the first two components are in-game activities, which are individual activities and guilds activities such as exploring the game world and shooting in-game videos; the last one is outside-game activities, also termed as "extra-virtual" (Pearce, 2009), which means things people are still doing digitally but not within the game world. An example of these activities is the use of voice chat. Through investigating these offline and online activities, some of the players' social interaction behaviors is inextricably related to their culture, such as Chinese players using *Shulaibao* to busker, and giving out red envelops during Spring Festival. Other social interactions and behaviors, which might not strongly represent the cultural pattern of the local players, still provided some examples for researchers to have a peek of foreign players' game-routine and emergent behaviors. The term "social interactions" indicates these behaviors are occurring between at least two people. Usually their relationships are as friends, strangers, or enemies. When I asked my interviewees how they made new friends in *WOW*, the majority of the answers were "from raids, guilds, and quests." Some of them already knew their in-game friends in real life. Researchers (Taylor, 2003; Nardi & Harris, 2006; Peterson, 2007; Nardi, 2010a) found that some female players joined the game because their boyfriends, husbands, or friends played

WOW. Friends are their main social connecting objects in game. Since players in *WOW* are usually members of guilds, friends can be classified as non-guild and guild friends. Players might play with their friends differently depending on what kinds of friends they are. With non-guild friends, a player usually chooses to do something else besides battling such as becoming tourists and visiting different places in *Azeroth*. With guild friends, a player might join in some guild activities such as raiding even though he does not know most of the players on the team. All of these social interaction behaviors will be discussed in this chapter.

5.1 Individual Activities

Play with Friends

Individual activities are typically those activities that players either do solo play or group play with non-guild friends in smaller group. Usually, the playing scale of these activities (the group size) is much smaller than that of the guilds activities. Interviewees listed some activities that they did with their friends: visiting new places and taking screenshots, completing quests that will reward them with in-game achievements, herbing, and collecting different pets from mission and raids.

Some players told me that their favorite activity was the emergent behavior of the "big adventure," which is to explore different places in the world and gain experience points (Exp) as reward, a practice that players created themselves. The big adventure is technically not a designated mechanic of the game although players get Exp for doing

this. Players regard themselves as real peoples living in virtual world and want to leave their footprint in every place in *Azeroth*. Some players take pride in being the first to discover a place and bringing all their friends there. One of my Chinese interviewees told me that he would occasionally just sit in a place for a long time and do nothing:

> Usually I will stay for a long time if the place I am standing on is very difficult to reach. Everybody is watching me and asking me how to get there. I know I am showing off, and I feel great being flattered. ----David (CoT)

Some players are enthusiastic about the "achievement" mechanic of *WOW*. Achievements, which cover every aspect of gameplay, including world exploration, PVE, PVP, quests, raids, and character development, are sub-goals that people can accumulate while they are doing other things. Since they include so many sub-categories, players might set up their goals to be experts in particular sub-categories but not others. Achievements are measurements to see how many game content and challenges players have accomplished. One Chinese interviewee's perspective:

> Some people may say reaching the highest level is the end of the game, for the rest of your game life will be filled with raiding. No, this is not the truth. I believe this is the start of the game. My favorite activity is to complete achievements in the game. I seldom join a raiding team to acquire loot; I join for achievements. Usually, I prefer to form an "achievement raiding team" with my friends and run raiding. Our goal is not to defeat raid bosses, but to do some special behaviors to accomplish achievements, which is usually not allowed by most of the "loot raiding team" leaders. ----Uchiha (CoC)

Figure 5.1 Companions in WOW (WoWWiki, n.d).


Figure 5.2 An undead is riding his giant mammoth (WoWWiki, n.d).

Another popular game content is pet collection, which is also associated with achievements Pets are creatures that players can summon or tame, like companions and mounts (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). Players can collect unlimited numbers of pets during game play. One of my Chinese interviewees (Lemon) mentioned that she returned to the game because she wanted to collect all the pets. She no longer participated in any "loot raiding team" but only recruited some close friends to particular raiding for collecting pets, which were possibly dropped by raid bosses as trophies.

Virtual Love Relationships

While some players prefer to experience the world of *Azeroth* alone, some prefer to share the fun with their friends or in-game lovers. Actually, having a virtual boy or girl friend is also common for players. Even though some players might already be married in real life and they would possibly never see their virtual lovers face to face, they are still fond of seeking a romantic relationship in games. Once they find one, they become virtual couples which behave just like real world couples. They date in game, join the same raiding team, and send gifts (virtual items) to each other. Some of these couples might argue, fight, have affairs, and eventually break up; some decide to get married in the game and have a virtual wedding, which is usually a grand celebration in most MMOGs. Other researchers (Taylor, 2006; Pearce, 2009) also found that virtual wedding is a common phenomenon in multiple American virtual world places. The couple will invite as many their friends and guild mates as possible to participate their wedding. They will stage the ceremony, take screenshots, and talk in voice chat (Figure 5.3). Some couples will also eventually meet and get married in real life.

One American interviewee described a wedding he attended to me:

> During the weddings, people would use trinket gear and spells to create a scenic environment for the two lovers. For example, one of the trinket gears created a beam of light in which they would stand and conduct their vows. ---- Jone (AoA)

Figure 5.3 A Chinese player couple is celebrating their Western-style virtual wedding with friends and guild mates (provided by interviewees).

Some virtual couples maintain long-term relationships through several MMOGs. One of my Chinese interviewees described his friend's virtual marriage:

> My friend is a rich guy. He's already married in real life, but he also has a girlfriend in game. Actually, they did not meet in *WOW*. They got together much earlier in another MMOG. They played together and switched to another game once they got tired of it, just like a couple moving to a new city. My friend paid for his girlfriend's "point cards" (WOW sells point cards to Chinese players for a certain number of hours of play) and they went to gold raids to buy loot for her. They never met in real life. He doesn't have any kids so far

and I guess his wife doesn't know about it. Anyway, I just can't understand why he is doing that. ---- Wong (CoC)

Although some interviewees told me that "finding a girlfriend" in the game is very common and easy, one interviewee (Uchiha) did not agree because he thought too small a number of female players were playing *WOW*, saying "It's not that I don't want to find one, but I can't."

Sometimes an online romance might result in a real life relationship or even an extramarital affair. During our conversation, one of my Chinese interviewees mentioned (Swan) a famous case, the Tongxu Event. In 2006, a husband, a *WOW* player, posted a thread on a popular Chinese forum, denouncing his wife, also a *WOW* player, for having a real-life affair with their guild leader, Tongxu. He also posted QQ (a Chinese instant chatting tool) chat log screenshots between his wife and Tongxu, showing that his wife slept with Tongxu for better equipment. The "netizens" showed the husband their empathy and decided to seek out Tongxu in real life. Some *WOW* players gathered and protested Tongxu and his guild, Watchmen[1], on the corresponding server. The protestors created a large number of level-one avatars that quickly formed a guild named "Watchmen Sympathy Group" and sent spam through all the chat channels, which were totally occupied and paralyzed by spam that condemned Tongxu. The protestors, at a stalemate with the Watchmen members (Figure 5.4), went to the *Ironforge* bank and continually committed suicide near the stove of the bank, their bodies eventually becoming a mountain of dead corpses (Figure 5.5).

[1] Stories that are publicly known do not use pseudonyms. All other instances from my research use pseudonyms.

Figure 5.4 The protestors and the Watchmen guild members were locked in a face-off (17173.com, 2006).

Figure 5.5 The protestors committed suicide near the stove of the Ironforge Bank and their corpses piled up (17173.com, 2006).

WOW affairs can also lead to extreme changes in behavior or attitude. In one case, a Chinese interviewee (Wong) who had been a hard-core player and explained everything to me with patience and enthusiasm did an about-face in a second interview two months later. He said, "Don't talk to me about this shitty game, I feel sick whenever I am reminded of it." He told me that his *WOW* girlfriend had cheated on him. Even though he never met his girlfriend in real life, he had still invested a lot of feelings into their virtual relationship. With his broken heart, he quit his guild and the game, and decided not to play it anymore.

Solo Players

One AoA player (Dark) told me that he was an "alt-oholic," which meant he always started new alternate characters with new classes to try out different experiences. He said he had lots of characters so that he could complete all the quests in a particular region, very rarely would he level them all the way. I asked him whether he completed quests in solo or with other players. He said he was a solo player and only liked playing in small groups.

By contrast to the "sharing experience" with friends, one interviewee (Wong) said that he would rather play by himself. He disliked guilds and thought guilds always contained too many shady deals and dirty tricks. He also believed that most guild leaders were bureaucrats and that most guild members were stupid and ignorant. He told me proudly that his weapon, the *Shadowmourne*, consisting of 50 broken pieces of materials that had been dropped by bosses in hard-level raids, was not a product of team work. He and his only friend had collected these pieces. Therefore, unlike many interviewees who considered their guilds as warm and reliable families, he was a completely anti-guild player. The perception is intriguing to me that he does not perceive playing with one friend as team work. Although he insisted that he hated team work, but his perception was actually contradicted to his action.

Facing Cheaters

Interactions also occurred between victims and cheaters. For example, Chinese *WOW* players have to buy point cards to continue playing the game. Some of them

prefer exchanging game gold for point cards instead of spending real money buying item. In either the case of gold or point card, the transaction involves the risk of the deal going bad. Being cheated in a point card transaction is a common experience for Chinese players. In addition, many players have experienced their character being stolen by keylogging software or the Trojan virus. Keylogging also refers to Keyboard Capturing, which is the action of recording keys struck on a keyboard, typically in a covert manner so that those using the keyboard are unaware that their actions are being monitored. One popular belief among Chinese players is that "If your account has never been stolen, then you've never really played *WOW*," which Nardi (2010a) also mentioned in her research. Moreover, sometimes players might mistakenly join a "black gold" raid and gain nothing because the raid leader runs away with the money by logging off before dispersing the winnings. In *WOW* Chinese servers, when a player confronts a con man, he takes extreme measures for revenge. Most interviewees told me that they would add a cheater as a friend, so once the cheaters went online, the players would get noticed and spam the chat channel to let everyone know this guy was a "bastard." One Chinese interviewee (Tree) mentioned his special reaction to a cheater. He once created a level-one character named "XXX go die with your whole family" and repeatedly jumped off a building to commit suicide. Every time he revived, he left a tomb with his name on it. He knew he would not be able to get back his gold so he preferred acting out this behavior in order to alleviate his anger.

Emergent Behavior on Individual Scales

Moving to a new server essentially means starting a game from scratch, which may explain why Chinese players are more aggressive than Taiwanese players, because they have to catch up for everything. When Chinese players immigrated to Taiwanese servers, they had to give up their avatars, equipment, achievements and levels, and all of the game gold that they earned in their former game servers. They had to create entirely new characters, start over with the leveling-up and money-collecting processes, and raise their characters from "barely streaking" to "armed to the teeth." For most experienced players, leveling-up was a boring and ordinary process, so most of them wanted to complete it as quickly as possible. For the sake of time efficiency, some Chinese players would pay somebody to level up for them, and buy gold from Chinese gold farmers and join a gold raid to auction for loot.

Traditional Chinese cultures and game cultures often intersect in interesting ways. During this process of leveling-up, two Chinese players chose not to be conventional. They were writers in real life, so they decided to utilize their book knowledge to earn some game gold. They also recorded their special experience and post threads on both Chinese and Taiwanese *WOW* forums (cOMANNDO, 2009).[2] On November 18, 2009, one player created a human race avatar called Blind Old Karl, stood outside the *Stormwind* Bank, and began to tell his tales of woe to the passersby, begging for money, saying his prologue, "Dear sir, would you like to hear a sad story from an old man?" His made-up miserable experiences were so abundant that he never repeated the same

[2] Stories that are publicly known do not use pseudonyms.

one twice. He once said his eyes were stabbed by a Horde spy, but ten minutes later he said it was hurt by strong light. When an audience member questioned his inconsistency, he apologized. “Please forgive an old man’s forgetfulness.” During three days, Blind Old Karl began to attract a regular audiences. They would bring beach umbrellas, picnic at the place, and listen to his stories. When the show was over, they would grant him some game gold. On November 21, 2009, the player of the Blind Old Karl posted a thread on the Chinese Blizzard forum and gave a detailed record of their artistic begging procedure. Next, he and his friend created a new avatar, which was a dwarf boy called Little Karl. They set up their avatars outside the *Ironforge* Bank and began their show, which was called *Shulaibao* in Chinese.

Shulaibao is also referred as Doggerel, Jingle, and Clever Tongue, is a real world storytelling practice. It is a folk art, actually very similar to rap music, which is popular in North China, in which a busker uses rhythmic storytelling with clapper accompaniment. In the historical past, it was a street performance by entertainers in front of shops asking for money. *Shulaibao* literally means “counting treasures,” for the entertainers would praise the goods in the shops for their diversity and exquisiteness. The presentations are be humorous and easily understandable. Drawing on their abundant life experience, the entertainers improvised the lyrics, making them more flexible according to what they had seen and situations they had been in. The basic lyric patterns were characterized by a six-syllable first line and a seven-syllable second line, with the last characters of the two lines have the same tone and rhyming. Taking a cue

from the Chinese practice of cross talk, a newer style of traditional *Shulaibao* performed by two people later came into being. (Cultural China, 2007)

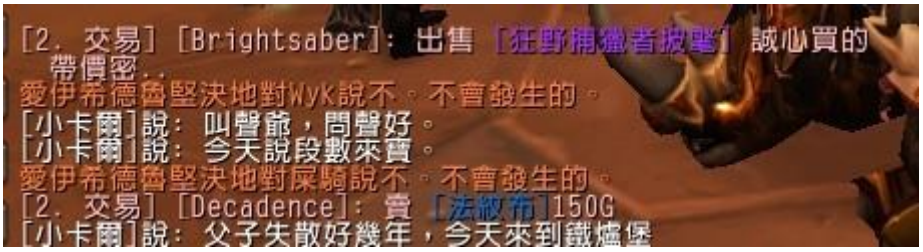

Figure 5.6 Little Karl started his prologue (cOMANNDO, 2009).

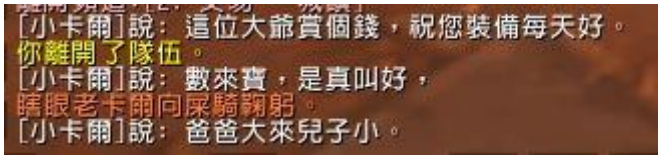

Figure 5.7 Old Karl continued Little Karl's lyric (cOMANNDO, 2009).

The Karls started their prologue, saying that they were separated for many years and reunited at *Ironforge*; they wanted to perform a cross talk, hoping that passerby would give them some money (Figure 5.6 and 5.7).

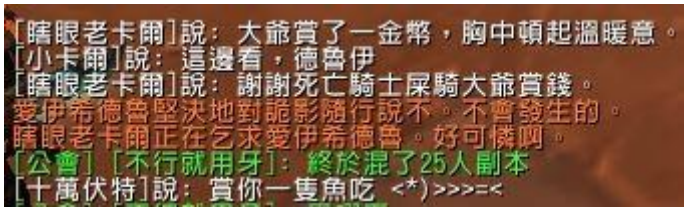

Figure 5.8 Old Karl thanked player for giving them money (cOMANNDO, 2009).

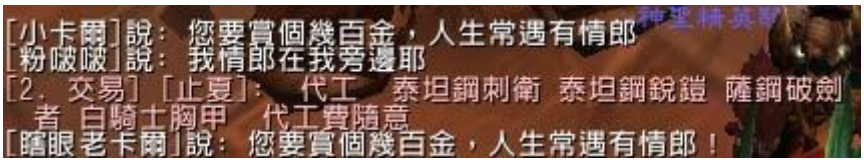

Figure 5.9 Little Karl thanked a female player but his ingratiation was not appropriate for her (cOMANNDO, 2009).

Figure 5.10 Little Karl quickly responded that they were a well matched couple (cOMANNDO, 2009).

Then, Little Karl saw a Death Knight watching their performance. They switched the topic to ingratiate this player, wishing he would be the top DPS player in the raid. We can see from the lyric that the Death Knight gave them one piece of gold (Figure 5.8). In the following hours, they improvised several sets of lyrics to flatter onlookers by praising their races, jobs, or character appearances. When the onlookers responded, they quickly gave instant feedback to the players in a rhyme pattern. For example, when a female player gave them some gold, they wished she would found her true love soon. However, the player replied that her boyfriend was standing beside her. Little Karl quickly praised them with these words: “What a beautiful couple with great fortune and kind-hearted, you are meant for each other” (Figures 5.9 and 5.10).

Figure 5.21 Players were surrounding the Karl's (cOMANNDO, 2009).

Figure 5.32 The Karl's posted threads on different WOW forums to attract more players to watch their performances (cOMANNDO, 2009).

The Karls performances quickly grabbed many players' attention. The Taiwanese players had never seen this method of begging for money. It was a huge success and soon became a legend on the server and widely spread among players from mouth to mouth. Some players from other servers came to that server and created an avatar for the purpose of seeing their performances (Figure 5.11). The player of the Blind Old Karl took screenshots of their performance and posted them on both the Chinese and the Taiwanese *WOW* forums, hoping that more players would come to watch their performances and give them money (Figure 5.12). The result was beyond their expectations; they earned more than 2,800 gold in two hours that day. In the next few days, they also earned a satisfying income.

The example of the Karls was a very special case that the two Chinese players reference directly from their real-life knowledge and cultural behavior to the game. The success was also locationally situated. Although Taiwanese players might not have the

same traditional performance of *Shulaibao*, their comprehension of Chinese language was so important that without it, the busker performance would never be successful.

One interview was a student and game designer in the real life. He told me some his emergent behavior in the game:

> I once made a hide-and-go-seek game in *Stormwind City*. It was during my first Christmas on the game. I placed a post on the general chat, telling people that they would receive 20 gold if they found me. After hiding for about 10 minutes, three gnomes found me XD. I gave them all 20 gold.

Pearce (2009) also identified hide-and-seek game as an emergent behavior in her *Uru* research. This coincidence suggests that different players might bring same social conventions to virtual world and use them as new social game activities.

This interviewee also mentioned other players' emergent prank:

> People would set down train sets in auction houses to annoy everyone. Trains sets cause everyone to start "choo chooing" loudly, so it basically became a crime to do that. It literally made people dislike you immediately if you put one down. Someone was always prepared to demolish your train set. ---- Jone (AoA)

He told me he played the hide-and seek game because he had not seen other players done it before. He thought it would be fun and might start a gaming atmosphere in *Stormwind City*. Unfortunately only few people noticed the game and others were too busy doing other things.

5.2 Guild Activities

Guild activities are usually organized by guild leaders. The purposes of these activities are threefold. One is to help players know more about each other and strengthen their team spirit. The second is to offer them some group cohesion or morale, and create a sense of belonging. The last purpose is to collect necessary items or materials from guild members for future raiding or other activities.

As discussed in Chapter 4, raiding is the most common activity that guild leaders organize. Most of the guild members join at least one guild raid to show they are active members. If a player does not participate in any raids or guild activities without providing any reason, he might be removed from the guild. A highly-skilled player is always welcomed by all guilds. Some famous highly-skills players all belong to one guild, making this guild one of more famous and powerful guilds in the game. Some powerful guilds even won the “First Kills” (Golub, 2010) honor in defeating hard-level bosses, which is accomplished when you are the first player group in the game to defeat a boss in a new expansion pack, worldwide. Players with these virtual honors became stars in the game. Other players dream of becoming friends with these star players. However, real friendships are usually established through long-term cooperation, such as raiding. The well-known reputations of the guild as well as the highly-skilled players attract many players to apply to these guilds, hoping to cooperate with these star players. Players who are allowed to join in the guild will feel proud of themselves because they become one of the elites. When a guild team goes through the whole raid and defeat all

raid bosses, the team take pictures (screenshots) as a memorial, glorify the pictures in Photoshop, and post them to their guild forum, aiming to promote the team spirit.

Figure 5.13 Screenshot from a guild video provided by an interviewee.

Figure 5.14 Screenshot from a guild video provided by an interviewee.

Figure 5.15 Screenshot from a guild video provided by an interviewee.

Figure 5.16 Screenshot from a guild video provided by an interviewee.

During one of the interview, an interviewee gave me a link to their guild video (Figures 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, and 5.16). Shooting guild video is very common in both Western and Eastern guilds. The themes of the videos can be very different, such as a fandom music video, storytelling, and displays of guild life. A guild life display is

usually an official and formal event for the whole guild. Guild leaders will hire video makers to record different guilds activities such as raids, weddings, or casual gatherings. Video makers will also record each member solo for a personal performance. This "together and solo" shooting mode will provide a dynamic combination to show the diversity of the guild lives and each member's characteristics that made them feel that they are one of this big family, which strengthen their sense of belonging. The video itself is also a useful promotion for recruiting new players.

Some guilds organize guild members to complete missions that will reward them with in-game achievements, which is an easy way to simply share a sense of achievement from individuals to groups. When they experience a sense of excitement and triumph for receiving these rewards, participants usually celebrate and give positive feedback to each other about this activity.

The fact that Chinese culture has several important festivals that originated from ancient fairy tales and old traditions means that both Chinese and Taiwanese guild leaders have many opportunities to organize festival activities. One CoT interviewee (Uchiha) said his guild held celebrations during both Chinese's New Year's Day and the Spring Festival. The guild leader would prepare some gold and items as gifts in advance. Guild members would roll dice to win the highest prize: around 200,000 in gold coin. The player who rolled the lowest would still get at least 50,000 in gold coin. The behavior of guild leaders handing out game gold to guild members was symbolic of the Chinese Spring Festival tradition where parents would hand out a "red envelopes" (a red envelope with real money inside, which is also called "lucky money") to their

children. However, another CoC interviewee (Swan) argued that players would seldom remain online during festivals since most of the players would choose to stay with their families. He also mentioned that "if you know someone that is still playing *WOW* during festivals, especially on Valentine's Day, it means he is a loser."

Emergent Behaviors on Group Scales

Figure 5.17 A sea turtle mount (WoWWiki, n.d)

Another Chinese interviewee (Lemon) told me that her guild once held a fishing competition so that the person who caught a sea turtle mount (Figure 5.17) first would win 5,000 in game gold (players can ride on different mounts in *WOW*, such as animals and vehicles). The reason for the competition was simple: The guild teams needed fish to cook power-strengthening dishes, which would ensure that players have better status during raids. However, it would have cost the guild leader a lot of money if he had had to purchase fish from the in-game market. Therefore, he organized this fishing

competition, in which players could at least acquire some fish if they did not get a sea turtle. Actually, the chance of getting a sea turtle was approximately 1/1500 to 1/2000, which meant that most of the players would only get fish instead. As a result, guild members turned in lots of fish to the guild leader which could be made into the powerful food.

According to prior research (Yee, 2005; Nardi, 2010; Seay et al, 2004), the majority of the MMOG players are male. Females tend not to play games for several reasons. For example, in China, playing video games is considered inappropriate behavior for girls, for her parents might think their daughter has learned something bad for her gender. The concept is very pervasive among most Chinese parents that the computers should be a tool for studying, not playing. Besides, when a girl tries to play video games with her brothers, she will be more likely to receive howls from them because of their perceived lack of expertise. As time goes along, she might form inaccurate conceptions such as: "girls are less skilled than boys, girls are not suited for playing games, and games don't belong to girls…" As a result, when these girls grow up, they have less interest and courage to play games.

One example of the conflict between males and females is very particular. One Chinese interviewee (Lemon) told me that her guild only accepts females: not only do the avatars have to be females, but also the players have to be females. I was surprised and asked her for the reason. She told me a long story about the guild and their female friendships. At the beginning, the guild was formed by mixed-gender players only playing female avatars, which meant no male avatars were allowed to join in the guild.

(My finding is contradict to Nardi (2010a) who says cross-gender play is rare in China. This might be due to her research was took place in the cyber cafe, *wang ba*, where people know each other and look at each other's screen, so they might feel shy to manipulate cross-gender avatars. While players who play in their house or dorms might feel brave enough to play cross-gender avatars.) One of the female players was a famous raid leader with strong capabilities. Unlike many other raid leaders who were *Tanks* or *Healers*, this woman was a Warlock, which is a less common but necessary *Damage Dealer* in raiding. However, these male players did not obey her instructions because of her gender. They had many conflicts during raid. These males did not trust in her and considered female players to be less skilled than males. As a result, they refused to allocate loot to female players with lower DPS, which made these females' raiding performances even worse. On the one hand, they tried to suppress the female players' capabilities. On the other hand, these male players wanted to hit on the female players during game play, which enraged most of them.

As a result, these female players, especially the highly-skilled raid leader, decided to quit this chauvinistic guild, and they founded their own all- girls' guild. In this instance of the guild, male players were no longer welcomed. Players who wanted to join in the guild had to log in to voice chat and speak to them to prove their gender. The girls brought most of the female members from the former guild to the new guild and formed a new raiding team. In contrast to what the male players did before, the less skilled or worse equipped players got loot first. When most of the team members' equipment reached a very competitive standard, then they began to allocate loot based

on DKP priority. Sometimes even though the individual players still needed the loot to perform better, they kindly allocated the loot to weaker players out of courtesy, which was rarely seen in other guild teams.

She also told me a story about how one of her guild mates joined the girls' guild. They knew each other during the process of leveling up. At that time they were in different guilds. The interviewee was already a member of the girls' guild, while her friend was still in a mixed-gender guild. The interviewee once invited her friend to their girls' guild during a casual chatting, saying, "If they don't play with you, come and join us." Later, when the friend reached the highest level and began to participate in raiding with her guild team, she really faced some problems. Since she never spoke in the guild voice chat, the members of the mixed-gender guild did not know she was a girl and they seldom took her to raids (sometimes male players tend to bring cute female players to raids so that they can "protect" and hit on her). She also did not have many friends because of her silence and was "benched" for a long time when others were participating in raids. Later, she decided to quit this guild and join in the girls' guild. The girls took her to raid and found that she was an excellent *healer*.

Female players being harassed is also a very common thing in American games and has been proved in multiple places. The female players even founded a website called "fat, ugly, and slutty", which is a site to record sexual harassment of women by men in games. Consalvo (2003, 2012) also gave lots of example to prove that harassment of female players has been occurring for a long time in her work. She also created an illustrated timeline to record the uglier aspects of gamer culture.

From these examples above, we can see some male players tend to show disrespect, essentially suppressing and demeaning female players' abilities and rights. They use their "masculine" prejudice to devalue female players' performance and believe female players are only subsidiary to male players. They refuse to admit that females can play games with equal skill to males. Luckily, awareness has been raised among these female players. They have demonstrated a strong willingness to fight against and make a clean break from the disrespectful male players. More and more female players are realizing the truth: females are not less skilled than males, and rules of "fair play" should apply to all players regardless of gender.

5.3 Extra-Virtual Activities

Although people play their avatars in a virtual environment, they are physically living in the real world. Therefore, when they are playing in the game, they can do other things simultaneously in real life, such as using voice chatting software. Although the game itself has a built-in voice chat, most of the players do not use that because it works terribly. Different countries' players are using different voice chatting software: the Chinese use YY, the Taiwanese use RC, and the American use Ventrilo and Teamspeak. Although the software is different, Chinese and Taiwanese players are basically doing same thing: singing and chatting, while American players tend to use voice chat mainly for chatting. This may be due to the fact of the popularity of Karaoke in Chinese culture, especially among the young people.

For people who do not know about the game, the fact that singing is somehow related to *WOW* might sound ridiculous, but most of the Chinese interviewees told me that singing in voice chat is a big part of their game lives. Most of the guilds organize "happy hour" regularly for the guild members to show their talents and play together. Players tend to sing because they are not required to sing very well. Since players usually communicate via voice chat, one's voice becomes the most important criterion on which the decision about whether a player is "attractive" or not is made. Some guild leaders utilize the female players' performances to build guild morale and keep the male players' loyalty. A female player with a cute or sexy voice will be more flattered by many lonely male players. By contrast, a female player that seldom speaks in a voice chat might be less noticed by males, as the case above with the player who was "benched" for not speaking in voice chat. Vice versa, male players with magnetic voices will also attract more female players. However, sometimes even though a player has an attractive voice, he might still stay single. One male interviewee complained to me that although his guild had a New Year's singing event, there was a lack of girls, so that the boys could only entertain themselves.

Singing is also related to other game experience. Many guilds have a traditional convention that they ask the winning players to sing if they acquire precious loot in raiding, which is a way to express appreciation to the team mates for fighting together. One interviewee told me that they would also ask "black face" or "black hand" team mates to sing as "punishment" when they did not get good loot. The reason is that most players believe the loot dropped from raid bosses is determined by the game system

when the first player enters the raid or touches the dead body of the boss. When the raiding team did not get any good loot from bosses, they believe it was completely the player's fault. Therefore, "black face" refers to the player who enters the raid first that causes a gloomy harvest; "black hand" refers to a player who touches the Boss first that gets only unwanted loot for the team.

Chatting is the main function of the voice chat software. Players in the same guild not only talk about things that happened in *WOW*, but also talk about things that happened in real life. They would share happiness and sorrow with their guild mates, and sometimes seek for solutions to problems in real life. Some players might be too busy to play the game, but they will still log in to voice chat and talk with his guild mates to get news of the game and the guild, which is a way to keep in touch with them. One of my CoT interviewees emphasized that sometimes he spends more time in talking in voice chat than playing in the game:

> I am a college student and I am studying abroad, so I don't live with my parents. Usually I play *WOW* after school and nobody would blame me if I play it too long. When I am at home, I will avoid playing *WOW* under my parents' eyes because they don't like me playing any online games. But I will still log in to voice chat and talk with my friends. I really miss these virtual friends, and it would not be any problem because my parents think I am not "playing" games. Even though I am not playing the game, we can still chat about daily topics and jokes; everything is just the same as before. I know most of them are in Taiwan

and I won't be able to meet them in real life, but I just can't imagine what life would be like without chatting to them. ---- David (CoT)

In summary, players are using voice chat as an extra-virtual tool for social interaction. Singing becomes an important measure both for players and guilds: players use it to become popular in guilds, while guilds use it to stimulate dynamic performances. Players also created a sub-culture to add singing social conventions under the raiding structure to activate the raiding atmosphere. During virtual social interactions, players formed strong friendships with their virtual friends even though they seldom or never hang out in real life. Chatting with virtual friends becomes a daily routine, which means virtual social interactions become a significant component of players' social needs in real life.

5.4 Offline Game Activities

Players might meet their virtual friends in real life if they really trust each other. Some guild leaders might also organize their own offline parties if they have enough guild members living in the same city. Players traveling to other cities might also meet with their virtual friends in private. However, meeting players offline is different than meeting avatars online because players might not behave the same in real lives as they do in the game. After all, the characteristics of the avatars are performed by the players, which might not equal to their real personalities. This echoes to Pearce's (2009) research that people form slightly different identities or personalities with their avatars.

According to interviews, most interviewees were satisfied with their offline meeting experiences, although some interviewees refused to see their virtual friends for safety or privacy reasons.

I asked my interviewees what kind of activities they would do when they met virtual friends off-line. Most of their answers were very similar to what we would do with our real life friends: having potluck, singing Karaoke, watching movies, or shopping (especially female players). One CoT interviewee (Star) told me that it might be more convenient for Taiwanese players to meet offline because Taiwan was much smaller than China. The Taiwanese guild he belonged to usually had a monthly potluck, but after the guild leader, who was a gangster in real life, killed a real person and ran away, the potluck became irregular.

Some players go to a real life *wang ba* (Chinese or Taiwanese cyber cafe) and play games together. One Chinese female interviewee (Lemon) told me that when she met her female guild mates in real life, following a potluck or a movie, they would go to *wang ba* and play *WOW* for a whole night, or at least a couple of hours. They would sit next to each other so that they could look at one another's screens. She also told me that she would not feel safe enough to stay in *wang ba* if she were alone. Lindtner and Nardi et al. (2008) reported that in China, *wang ba* was the most common site of play, which was a hybrid cultural ecology of gaming as a digital and physical space of collaboration. Thomas and Lang (2007) also mentioned that Chinese players went to *wang ba* not only for the broadband Internet but also to play with their close friends and peers. Another Chinese male interviewee (Swan) also mentioned he would play

with his guild mates in *wang ba*. Moreover, besides playing *WOW*, they would also play other games such as *LOL* and *DOTA*, which are very popular among male players in China. They even formed a semi-fixed team playing *DOTA* after that.

One American interviewee (Stove) told me that he and his *WOW* friends had a plan to meet in Las Vegas and gamble there. One American interviewee (Jone) told me he have never been able to meet his friends because the country was so big, people were living separately and some of them did not even live in the United States.

One CoC interviewee (Uchiha) mentioned that most of his guild mates were actually classmates in real life, which echoed Nardi's research that many Chinese played *WOW* in their dormitories (2010a). Therefore, his social circles of real life friends and virtual friends actually overlapped to a great extent. He believed that knowing each other well was safer for both game play and real life, because the risk of being cheated would be decrease.

In China, young players meeting one-on-one with virtual friends of the same gender might be dubbed as *mian ji*, which literally means "meeting gay." Some Chinese young people also call themselves and their virtual friends as *ji you*, which means "gay buddies" in self-mockery. When somebody calls someone *ji you*, it means that he really likes or at least wants to be friends with that person. This phenomenon is pervasive in the animation, comic, and game (ACG) circles in China, and it has gradually been adopted by youngsters of both genders (males used it first). When a young man says, "I am going to meet my *ji you* tomorrow" it does not mean he is gay, but possible that he is just going to meet his virtual friends.

5.5 Conclusion

From the above examples, we can see that players are using diverse methods for communication and social interaction in both digital and physical spaces. The social circles of the players can be divided into private friends and guild friends. Although some of the friends in both circles overlap, players will have different options when they are playing with different friends. Players invest their real emotions into in-game friendship, love, and even hostile relationships. The creation of new slang terms is also evidence to prove that virtual friendship has become an important part of young players' social life. However, they are also taking a risk to be mentally hurt by other players. The imbalance between the two genders not only appears in the ratio of male to female players, but also in the game status. Male players need to look at this problem and adjust their attitudes toward female players. "Fair play" should be applied to both genders. Emergent behaviors typically appear in conflicts or predicaments: To solve their dissatisfaction, players borrow from their real life experiences and apply them to the game, which might twist the designated function of the game. Players also combine outside game tools with the game mechanics as an organic whole, by developing their own sub-culture for online and offline social gatherings.

From my investigation, I found that although all the players of all three countries' like forming virtual friendships in games, Chinese and Taiwanese players are more likely to develop stronger relationships with virtual friends and convert them into real-

life friendships while American players are more conservative and reluctant to meet virtual friends offline. This difference may be due to the real-life societies of the three countries: Most Chinese players are young adults or teenagers who are only children in their families (because of the One-Child-Policy in China), they have long coveted the chance to play with peers and friends because they seldom have siblings to play with. However, most Chinese parents want their children to spend time studying rather than playing outside (i.e., they prefer that their children stay at home) because all parents want their children to get into the best college. As a result, most children only establish friendships with their classmates and virtual friends (if they are allowed to play online games). When children grow up and go to college, they have more freedom (usually when they go to another city and live in dormitories) to participate in social activities. In this case, they want to transform these virtual friends into real-life friends because they have already shared so many feelings and thoughts with them through virtual social interactions. At first, they might meet in groups (usually for guild groups), but later on some virtual friends might meet separately. For the Taiwanese, since Taiwan is relatively small compared to Mainland China and the United States, players are more likely to live in the same city and meet each other. In addition, the Taiwanese are friendlier and more enthusiastic, so they are more likely to meet virtual friends in groups in offline social gatherings. In the United States, since most American families have more than one child, children who play games usually have peers to play with in real life, so they do not have the strong need to seek friends in the virtual world. This may also explain why American players do not develop deep friendships like the Chinese

players do. Another possible reason for this might be that American players may be more concerned about maintaining their privacy and security. Arnold, Graesch, Ochs, and Ragazzini (2012) demonstrated that nowadays American children were kept indoors by their parents most of their time. Bowman, Hunter, Dill, and Juelfs-Swanson (2012) also claimed that today American children had a smaller roaming radius. American parents do not dare to give their own children the same freedom they had experienced as kids, because they perceive the world to be much dangerous than it used to be. With such upbringing background, American players tend not to tell people their real names, and they are much less likely to meet in real life.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

6.1 Summary

This study is mainly focused on this following research question: Does real world culture influence the form of the virtual world culture? Sub-questions of this main question are as follows: What aspects of their cultures do players bring from their own lives and how do they incorporate them into their game behavior? Does the behavior of players in different cultures reveal different values and attitudes in the game? When players immigrate to other servers, what are some habits and behaviors from their original servers that they bring to the new homeland servers?

The findings discussed in the preceding chapters yield four main conclusions. The first was that real world culture indeed influenced virtual world culture.

Although in most MMOGs the basic culture and rules of the virtual world were planned by the game designers, players in different countries formed their own emergent sub-cultures and sub-rules in many game aspects under the larger structure of the designated game rules and social conventions. As noted in Chapters 4 and 5, these sub-cultures, which revealed a sense of the values and the customs of the local cultures, were agreed upon, shared, and executed by players as sub-rules in their game behaviors. Some of the sub-cultures were obvious culture in the real world. For example, the busker performance of *Shulaibao,* the guild leader handing out gold to his guild

members during Spring Festival, and the use of voice chat as virtual Karaoke represent behaviors that manifest in obvious ways in which players actually bring their cultural traditions into the game. It can also manifest in subtle ways in which the Chinese players are becoming more capitalistic and more competitive and that subtle cultural characteristics are also influencing their game play.

Although players from different countries formed different sub-rules and social conventions, some exceptions occurred, one of which was that players on different countries' servers formed the same sub-rules according to their belief systems. The reasons were twofold: First, some sub-cultures formed spontaneously, and since players in different countries might have shared a common culture or thoughts in some aspects, they might formulated similar sub-rules. For example, American, Chinese, and Taiwanese players all believed in "fair play," but the social conventions that they enacted to create the rules of "fair play" differed. Fairness, as a mutual concept, manifested in different ways through practices.

Another reason why players on different countries' servers formed the same sub-rules was that although some sub-cultures were foreign, players learned these new rules from other cultures and absorbed them into their own behaviors. For example, Chinese and Taiwanese players shared some similar cultures but also had unique and distinct ones. When players of the two countries encountered one another, since they had different social conventions, in order to play with one another, through the slow process of emergence, they had to negotiate their different practices around the concept of "fair play." Characteristics were also an aspect of the negotiation. Although Chinese players

were rude but skilled, Taiwanese players wanted to play with them because these Chinese players brought better skills to the table. Chinese players found that Taiwanese players were more polite and decided to learn good manners from them because it created a better environment for the game play experience. Players also combined outside game tools such as forums, voice chat, and text chat, into the game mechanics as an organic whole, and these extra-virtual practices help them develop their own sub-culture for online and offline social gatherings.

The immigration of Chinese players' also reminded me of the diaspora and immigrants cultures in a paper by Marcus (1995), who followed intellectual property (IP) from country to country. By contrast, my study followed people across IP. While he talked about people carrying IP from one place to another, I am talking about people from different geographical locations across the same IP. The difference between his and my study is that in my study, although the immigrants are bringing their cultures with them, their substrates (geo location) are the same.

The second finding was that players tended to bring real life experiences to games, especially in aspects such as social interaction and cooperation. The principles of "fair play" were subjective and culturally situated; the game itself did not embody a sense of "fair play" by the cultural standard of the players. In this circumstance, players used their emergent social conventions to complicate and replenish the game rules, and also negotiated to ensure that players enjoyed fairness as well as freedom during game play. Furthermore, players might have had a different comprehension of "fairness" depending on their culture and their own sense of values. Although some cultural

patterns appeared, players also had individual perceptions that might not necessarily relate to culture. Take real-money trading (RMT) for example. Players' attitudes to RMT related to their own judgment or game environment rather than their location or education background. Some players embraced attitudes towards some in-game phenomena such as gold raids or real-money transaction, which might not have been tolerated by other players.

The third finding was that when players immigrated from their original server to other countries' servers, initially they tended to find people from the same country to play with and followed their old social conventions, which were the sub-rules they created on their old servers, rather than play with the local players and adapt to new customs. However, over time, players developed hybrid cultures that adopted features from both the old cultures. This phenomenon actually parallels that in the real world according to some sociological research that claims there is no rule based segregation in a city—that people will naturally self-segregate and find people like themselves. Players from different countries also treated the game differently: While Chinese players were more aggressive, Taiwanese and American players preferred to play for fun and leisure. When players immigrated, they brought their old attitudes and conventions with them, which might not have been accepted by the local players because they lacked the same sense of values. For example, the Taiwanese players perceived the Chinese players as "less polite but more skilled" and the Chinese thought the Taiwanese had better manners. The conflicts of different conventions were essentially conflicts of different cultures. Both sides were afraid of changes and they

resisted change, but they were not aware that their attitudes and senses of values were actually changing gradually as the result of exposure to this new player group and its culture. Instead of one having an overwhelming advantage and absorbing the other completely, the outcome of the conflicts was usually a hybrid combination in which both sides compromised and adopted some of the conventions of each. The two types of players that once been to be in a contentious relationship, but slowly, as they began to see and learn from the advantages of each other's approaches, they started to cooperate and assimilate customs in both directions. When a new hybrid convention came into being, features were adopted from both old conventions.

The last finding was that emergent behaviors were more likely to take place during conflicts and predicaments. Since players did not like changes, they tended to follow old conventions during play. However, when conflicts or predicaments occurred, old conventions became invalid. To solve their dissatisfaction and achieve their goals, players had to seek out new ways of interacting. Thus they reference their real life experiences and applied them to the game, which might have twisted or changed the designated function of the game. Another example of emergent behaviors related to gender relations in Chapter 5 when female players abandoned the male players, founded their own guild, and started a Utopian guild life. The girls' behaviors proved that female players are trying to take control of their own game experiences and create a fair game play environment.

6.2 Future Extensions

Future research in this area will focused more on players, sub-cultures, sub-rules, individuals, groups, and their relationships. Sub-rules usually originated from domestic sub-cultures or are adopted from foreign cases. We should look at these sub-cultures and see how they connect with individuals or groups; what benefits or losses these foreign sub-rules bring to the players, how they experiment with these foreign sub-rules, whether or not they localize these sub-rules, and how would sub-rules differ if they were applied on different scales such as individuals and groups. Further questions such as to what extent the game designer should plan the game and how much should be left to the players should also be discussed. Future studies should look at how game designers can "localize" games to provide players with better experiences. Sometimes game designers already localize the game, but then the players localize it even more. The designers will thus have new opportunities to study the behaviors of players as a result of their localization efforts.

Future studies should also look at how researchers can possibly find and observe more emergent behaviors, and also play closer attention to the real-world cultural aspects of these behaviors, as well as the ways in which immigrants impact and change behavior. As we know, emergent behaviors are hard to find and observe because researchers are not always be able to keep an eye on the game and interviewees would not be able to tell whether their in-game behaviors are "emergent" or not. Research should focus on what typical patterns produce emergent behaviors and what kinds of players are likely to have emergent behaviors.

Studies should also examine the relationship between genders in *WOW* or other MMOGs. The conflicts mentioned in Chapter 5 revealed a pervasive concept that currently female players suffer from male bias because of their perceived lack of expertise. Owning to time and scaling constraints, this study was not able to find more related cases that provide evidence about whether females adopt other emergent measures to deal with the issue of fairness. Since females have already raised their awareness for equal rights, they might also begin to demand fairness in the virtual environment.

Researchers should also look at what other tools players use to combine the virtual world with the extra-virtual world. RMT, forums, and voice chat are some of the options used by players. Augmentations such as mods (Kow and Nardi, 2010) are also helpful tools that provide extra facility to the players. What purpose do they have for using extra tools besides social interaction and raiding? What kinds of games limit or allow the use of extra tools? Researchers should compare games and see to what extent the use of extra tools provide players with enjoyments while not adversely affecting their experiences of game play.

In fact, both in game design and research, the impact of real world culture is often taken for granted. Most people neglect the imperceptible cultural influence on player behavior. In addition, as a person from China who speaks Chinese and understands the culture, I can see these nuances in Chinese patterns of behavior. Without my background of knowing real world Chinese culture, I could not have completed this study or even noticed these cultural nuances. Besides, I can also understand the Chinese

traditional modern cultures and use this knowledge as a contextual background to interpret competitive game attitudes and money-seeking business of Chinese players. Because game researchers and designers from other cultures are also in a better position to interpret their cultures, they could study players from their own countries.

From the above conclusions, we can see that studying cultural behavior is an important subset of the study of player behavior. This paper will provide a unique perspective from which future researchers can interpret various reactions of players to the same event. It also provides a broader context in which future researchers can study the localization of players from other countries and compare it with that of domestic players. This study also demonstrated that emergent behaviors are likely to occur when players face problems or difficult challenges.

This thesis should be of interest to designers of *WOW* who have a more intricate view of what is happening with their games in foreign countries. The idea of localization often pertains only to language; however, other aspects of localization are often overlooked. Therefore, as online game become more global, game designers could benefit from research that delves into the influence of real world culture on virtual game world culture and ethnographers and researchers that could help them create more appropriate game contexts. Moreover, game designers could also benefit from learning about the attitudes and behaviors of their target audience culture before they designing their games instead of waiting until players localize the game themselves. Even though foreign designers may know some of the concepts, they still tend not to take them into account when actual designing game. For example, in Chinese culture,

the dragon is a symbol of elegance and God, while in medieval role-play games, the dragon is evil and greedy.

Not only should designers of *WOW* study the cultural differences and localization of their audience, but future designers of MMOGs should also learn from it them. After all, such knowledge will help them anticipate how players of different cultures might play their games and use their software to design for global audience in the future. By analyzing players' diverse responses to software and content, designers can apply what they learned about players to adjust the rules, the mechanics, and even the genre of their games.

References

Afterlife. (n.d.). Dkp explanation (historical). Retrieved February 4, 2014, from http://afterlifeguild.org/dkp-explanation-historical/

Arnold, J. E., Graesch, A. P., Ochs, E., & Ragazzini, E. (2012). Life at home in the twenty-first century: 32 families open their doors. Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press.

Ayoub, N. C. (2006). 'Play Between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture'. Chronicle of Higher Education, 52(49), A16.

Bainbridge, W. (2010). Warcraft Civilization : Social Science in a Virtual World. MIT Press.

Barton, Matt. (2008). Dungeons and Desktops: The History of Computer Role-Playing

Blizzard (n.d.). Beginner's Guide. Retrieved March 12, 2014, from http://us.battle.net/wow/en/game/guide/

Blizzard Entertainment. 2008.World of Warcraft Reaches New Milestone: 10 Million Subscribers. Press release. http://www.blizzard.com/us/press/080122.html. Last accessed July 2008.

Blizzard Forum. (2012, March 13). Entio. Sat. Entio's GDKPs - Now 7/8H, 2mil+ pot, 82k+ cut. World of Warcraft. Retrieved February 8, 2014, from http://us.battle.net/wow/en/forum/topic/4175360072?page=1

Blizzard Forum. (2013, April 15). Mobilebear. 25 Man GDKP Runs. World of Warcraft. Retrieved February 6, 2014, from http://us.battle.net/wow/en/forum/topic/8569860045#1

Blizzard Forum. (2014, January 19). Harley. Sat. Afternoon Raiding Rainbows Hosted GDKP. World of Warcraft. Retrieved February 8, 2014, from http://us.battle.net/wow/en/forum/topic/11307090900#1

Boellstorff T, Nardi B, Pearce C, Taylor T. Ethnography And Virtual Worlds: A Handbook Of Method. Princeton University Press; 2012.

Bopomofo. (2014, January 9). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved February 7, 2014, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bopomofo

Bowman, C. D., Hunter, J. D., Dill, J. S., & Juelfs-Swanson, M. (2012, November 15). Culture of American Families: Executive Report. . Retrieved May 7, 2014, from http://www.iasc-culture.org/survey_archives/IASC_CAF_ExecReport.pdf

Chan, P. B. (2010). Narrative participation within game environments [electronic resource]: role-playing in massively multiplayer online games / by Pauline B. Chan. Atlanta, Ga. : Georgia Institute of Technology, 2010.

cOMMANDO. (2009, November 21). 台服 世界之樹 乞討者瞎眼卡爾父子的數來寶演出. 台服 世界之樹 乞討者瞎眼卡爾父子的數來寶演出. Retrieved January 1, 2014, from http://bbs.ngacn.cc/read.php?tid=2922213

Consalvo, M. (2003). The monsters next door: Media constructions of boys and masculinity. Feminist Media Studies, 3(1), 27-45.

Consalvo, M. (2012). Confronting toxic gamer culture: A challenge for feminist game studies scholars. Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology, 1.

Corneliussen, H. G., & Rettberg, J. W. (Eds.). (2008). Digital culture, play, and identity: A World of Warcraft reader. MIT Press.

Cultural China. (2007). Shulaibao. Retrieved March 3, 2014, from http://www.cultural-china.com/chinaWH/html/en/17Traditions1833.html

Deterding, S. (2009). The Game Frame: Systemizing a Goffmanian Approach to Video Game Theory. Breaking New Ground: Innovation in Games, Play, Practice and Theory. Proceedings of DiGRA.

Dibbell, J. (2007a). *Play money: Or, how I quit my day job and made millions trading virtual loot*. Basic Books.

Dibbell, J. (2007b). The life of the Chinese gold farmer. *The New York Times, 17*.

Ducheneaut, N., M.Wen, N,Yee, and G.Wadley.2009.Body and Mind: A study of Avatar Personalization in Three virtual Worlds. In Processings Conference on Human-Computer-Interaction, 1151-60,New York: ACM Press.

Edward Castronova, Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Engestrom, Y. (1987). Learning by expanding. Helsinki: Orienta-Konsultit Oy.

English auction. (2013, November 28). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 02:42, February 7, 2014, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_auction

Fine, G. A. (2002). Shared fantasy: Role playing games as social worlds. University of Chicago Press.

Goffman, E. “The Interaction Order,” in American Sociological Review 48 (February 1983), pp. 1-17.

Goffman, E. (1961). Encounters: Two studies in the sociology of interaction.

Goffman, E. (1974). Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience. Harvard University Press.

Golub, A. (2010). Being in the world (of warcraft): raiding, realism, and knowledge production in a massively multiplayer online game. Anthropological Quarterly, 83(1), 17-45.

Heeks, R. (2009). Understanding" Gold Farming" and Real-Money Trading as the Intersection of Real and Virtual Economies. Journal For Virtual Worlds Research, 2(4).

Johnson, Leif (2011-10-23). "BlizzCon 2011: Mists of Pandaria Overview." Retrieved 2011-10-28.)

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2005). Communicative action and the public sphere. Denzin, NK & Lincoln, YS (red.), The Sage handbook of qualitative research, 3, 559-603.

Kow, Y. M., & Nardi, B. (2010). Culture and creativity: World of Warcraft modding in China and the US. In Online worlds: Convergence of the real and the virtual (pp. 21-41). Springer London.

Kuutti, K. (1996). Activity theory as a potential framework for human-computer interaction research. Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human-computer interaction, 17-44.

Lineage. (2014, April 19). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved January 21, 2014, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lineage_(video_game)

Leigh Alexander (January 22, 2008). "World Of Warcraft Hits 10 Million Subscribers." Gamasutra. Retrieved January 22, 2008. http://www.gamasutra.com/php-bin/news_index.php?story=17062

Lin, Holin and Chuen-Tsai Sun. (2011) “A Chinese Cyber Diaspora: Contact and Identity Negotiation on Taiwanese WoW Servers.” Presented at the biannual meeting of Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA) 2011 International Conference: Think Design Play, held from September 14-17, at Utrecht School of the Arts, Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Lindtner, S., Nardi, B., Wang, Y., Mainwaring, S., Jing, H., & Liang, W.

(2008, November). A hybrid cultural ecology: world of warcraft in China. In Proceedings of the 2008 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work (pp. 371-382). ACM.

吕巾娇，刘美凤，& 史力范．(2007)．活动理论的发展脉络与应用探析．*现代教育技术，1*，8-14.

Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: the emergence of multi-sited ethnography. Annual review of anthropology, 24(1), 95-117.

Mortensen, Torill Elvira. (2006) “WoW is the New MUD.” Games and Culture.1, pp. 397 - 413.

Nakamura, L. (2009). Don't hate the player, hate the game: The racialization of labor in World of Warcraft. Critical Studies in Media Communication, 26(2), 128-144.

Nardi, B. A. (1996). Activity theory and human-computer interaction. Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human–computer interaction, 436, 7-16.

Nardi, B., & Harris, J. (2006, November). Strangers and friends: Collaborative play in World of Warcraft. In Proceedings of the 2006 20th anniversary conference on Computer supported cooperative work (pp. 149-158). ACM.

Nardi, B. (2010a). My life as a night elf priest: An anthropological account of World of Warcraft. University of Michigan Press.

Nardi, B. (2010b). Digital imaginaries: How we know what we (think we) know about Chinese gold farming | Nardi | First Monday. Digital imaginaries: How we know what we (think we) know about Chinese gold farming | Nardi | First Monday. Retrieved January 12, 2014, from http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3035/25

Nexon Corporation. (2006, April 13). Maplestory haeoe jinchul sarye. Maplestory haeoe jinchul sarye. Retrieved December 16, 2011, from http://web.archive.org/web/20060715012302/http://gamestudy.org/eblog/wp-content/uploads/2006/04/nexon.pdf

Oldenburg, R. (1999). The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors,General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through The Day. New York: Marlowe &Company.

Pearce, C. (2006). Productive play game culture from the bottom up. Games and Culture, 1(1), 17-24.

Pearce, C. (2009). Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds.Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Peterson, H. (2007). The game of (family) life: Intra–family play in World of Warcraft (Doctoral dissertation, Ph. D. disseration, London School of Economics).

Pinyin. (2014, February 6). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 02:43, February 7, 2014, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinyin

Sean. (2009, September 11). WOW台服金团不得不知道的十大“潜规则”. WOW台服金团不得不知道的十大“潜规则”. Retrieved February 1, 2014, from http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_61ebd6260100epyc.html

Seay, A. F., Jerome, W. J., Lee, K. S., & Kraut, R. E. (2004, April). Project massive: a study of online gaming communities. In CHI'04 extended abstracts on Human factors in computing systems (pp. 1421-1424). ACM.

Sexy Corn. (Director). (2009). *The War of Internet Addiction*

Shi. Y. Q. (施芸卿.) (2012). 虚拟世界中的公平演练——以《 魔兽世界》 为例探讨虚拟世界团队的合作机制. 青年研究, (1), 24-37.

Statistic. (2014, February 1). *Statista*. Retrieved April 16, 2014, from http://www.statista.com/statistics/276601/number-of-world-of-warcraft-subscribers-by-quarter/

Steinkuehler, C. A. & Williams, D. (2005). Where Everybody Knows Your (Screen) Name: Online Games as "Third Places." Paper presented at DiGRA 2005: Worlds in Play, Annual Conference of the Digital Games Research Association, Vancouver, Canada.

Stone, R. (2009). China Reins in Wilder Impulses in Treatment of ‘Internet Addiction’. Science, 324(5935), 1630-1631.

Sun, C. T., Chen, C. H., Hsieh, J. L., & Lin, H. (2007). Comparing Taiwanese and American WoW Player Cultures in Terms of Achievement.

Taylor, T. L. (2003). Power gamers just want to have fun? Instrumental play in a MMOG.

Taylor, T. L. (2006a). Play between worlds exploring online game culture. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Taylor, T. L. (2006b). Does WoW change everything? How a PvP server, multinational player base, and surveillance mod scene caused me pause. Games and Culture, 1(4), 318-337.

Thomas, S., & Lang, T. (2007). From field to office: the politics of corporate ethnography. In Proc. of Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conf (pp. 78-90).

Tyrian. (2009, October 9). GDKP Run Discussion: Spread it to your server. Elitist Jerks. Retrieved February 6, 2014, from http://forums.elitistjerks.com/index.php?showtopic=76624

Visweswaran, K. (1994). Fictions of feminist ethnography. U of Minnesota Press.

Wanenchak, S. (2010). Tags, Threads, and Frames: Toward a Synthesis of Interaction Ritual and Livejournal Roleplaying. Game Studies, 10(1).

Wolcott, H. F. (2002). Writing up qualitative research... better. Qualitative Health Research, 12(1), 91-103.

World of Warcraft. (n.d.). Retrieved March 12, 2014, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_of_Warcraft

WoWWiki. (n.d.). Damage dealer. Retrieved February 6, 2014, from

http://www.wowwiki.com/Damage_dealer

WoWWiki. (n.d.). Healer. Retrieved February 6, 2014, from http://www.wowwiki.com/Healer_class

WoWWiki. (n.d.). Tank. Retrieved February 6, 2014, from http://www.wowwiki.com/Tank

WoWWiki. (n.d.). Dragon kill points. Retrieved February 6, 2014, from http://www.wowwiki.com/Dragon_kill_points

WoWWiki. (n.d.). Greed. WoWWiki. Retrieved February 6, 2014, from http://www.wowwiki.com/Greed

WoWWiki. (n.d.). Need. WoWWiki. Retrieved February 6, 2014, from http://www.wowwiki.com/Need

WoWWiki.(n.d.). Party. WoWWiki. Retrieved February 6, 2014, from http://www.wowwiki.com/Party

WoWWiki. (n.d.). Pickup group. WoWWiki. Retrieved February 6, 2014, from http://www.wowwiki.com/Pickup_group

WoWWiki. (n.d.). Pickup group. WoWWiki. Retrieved February 6, 2014, from http://www.wowwiki.com/Mount

Yee, N. (2007). WoW gender–bending. The Daedalus Project.

17173.com. (2006, April 17). http://news.17173.com/content/2006-04-17/20060417162023986.shtml. 魔兽世界麦服丑闻 事态升级. Retrieved February 9, 2014, from http://news.17173.com/content/2006-04-17/20060417162023986.shtml